THE WAY OF THE EAST

ARTHUR WEIGALL

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BY ARTHUR WEIGALL

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PART I

THE WAY OF THE EAST

Chapter I — *By Way of Introduction*

In the pages of this book the writer is about to present a very curious, and perhaps somewhat sordid, story of the meeting of East and West. It is, in fact, the love-story of a certain Colonel Romance, a dapper little English cavalry officer, who, at the perilous age of forty, while on leave in London, met the woman of his destiny on her emergence from the quiet home in Sussex in which she had been brought up; but, in the development of the narrative, the two lovers are brought into direct contact with modern native life in Egypt, and, in the recording of the circumstances which thus arises, two themes happen to become so prominent that they seem to call for particular treatment.

These two themes are perfectly legitimate, yet they are based on propositions which are generally overlooked; and hence, by way of introduction to this odd story which he has to relate, the writer has felt that a few words of explanation are necessary, even though they retard the opening of the tale itself until the second chapter of the book—a proceeding which, in these days of hurry, must be almost unendurably exasperating to the casual reader.

The first, and more important, theme will be ap-

proached most agreeably by a little dissertation on the subject of Colonel Romance's family; for that sort of thing has been a matter of intense interest to the English ever since they learnt all about genealogies, coats-of-arms, chivalry, and knightly honour from their Oriental opponents in the Crusades.

At the time of the first Crusade, the writer is glad to be able to state, the House of Romance had already been long-established in England; but whether it was of British, Anglo-Saxon or Norman origin has never been decided. Indeed, it has been suggested by some scholars that its foundation—as perhaps the name implies—is to be sought in the days when the Roman legions evacuated our shores, in the year A. D. 436, leaving behind them those hundreds of squalling little half-castes who were hardly yet full-grown when, between A. D. 449 and 455, the Anglo-Saxon settlement of the country so widely extended the range of their marriage-market.

The Romans had been established in Britain for some 400 years—a period of much the same length as that which separates the present day from the time of Henry the Eighth, or even from that of the Discovery of America; and at all the main centres throughout the country the types must have become pretty thoroughly jumbled up. The Romans themselves, here in Britain, had been of very mixed stock. There were Italians, Greeks, Spaniards, Portuguese, Germans, Gauls, Nervii, Belgians, Thracians, Dacians, Chilicans, Dalmatians, Pannonians, Moors, Egyptians, and Arabs; and many a fair British mother must have stared in blank astonishment at her brown-eyed baby, just as a hen looks in cackling alarm at a duckling she has hatched.

When the blood of these half-castes was mixed,

presently, with that of Angles, Saxons, Jutes, and other German tribes, the families of England must have been about as miscellaneous a lot as those of the United States of America at the present day. Then came the Danes and the Normans, the latter themselves a mixture of Danes, Norwegians, and French; and thus at the time when the House of Romance first steps out of this chaotic medley into the pages of English annals, and inhabitant of this inland of ours might well have claimed to be the progeny of the world at large, the last thing in heterogeneous intermarriages, the product of the greatest international hotchpotch ever known in earth's history, God's complete and glorious mongrel.

The House of Romance, however, like so many other English families, seemed instinctively to shun a stabilisation of its polygenous type; and a study of its pedigree shows that new foreign blood was introduced from time to time by marriage. Thus, in the reign of Edward the Third the Romance of the day, like many a contemporary, married a Welsh lady from over the border; again, in the reign of James the First, a Scotch woman climbed into the family tree; then, in the days when William of Orange had brought a multitude of people into England from the Netherlands, a Dutch lady married a Romance; and, lastly, our Colonel Romance's great-grandmother was of Irish stock, tracing her descent, as do the majority of Irish families, from Milesius, a Scythian soldier of fortune, who had married, so tradition says, the daughter of Pharaoh, King of Egypt.

The genealogies of most English families reveal these sort of mixtures, to which may often be added the blood of Huguenot and Flemish settlers, and so forth; and Colonel Romance was, by this very token,

typical. He was neither dark nor fair. His hair was the nondescript color of mud; his eyes were the grey which is neither blue nor brown; his refined and chiselled features were in no wise exaggerated nor noticeable. His type was pronounced only in the absence of peculiarities; you could see at a glance that he was English, because he was not German, not Latin, not Greek, not Jewish, not anything in particular. The fact that he was well groomed, neatly dressed, athletic, and sunburnt, would, of course, tell you nothing in regard to his nationality; for at the present day a bathed, brushed, and English-tailored appearance is pretty often to be found amongst the gentlemen of Europe and America, and even in the latter continent—now that golf has become fashionable—a certain amount of ruddy sunburn has begun to take the place of the yellow cheeks of the past.

He had the modern Englishman's lack of pronounced mannerisms, that lack which makes our mongrel race so easy of carriage, so simple, so nondescript, so shyly confident. You will know an American by his hearty handgrip and his frank stare: characteristics which indicate a calculated bid for that confidence in him which is so necesasry to successful business. You could tell a German before the war by the way he clicked his heels together and by his stiff, insolent bow; and, since the war, you can tell him by an ingratiating amiability due to a consciousness of his fall from grace. You may identify a Frenchman by his desire to explain in emphatic gestures the words which he thinks you are too stupid to understand, or by his shrug which means that there are some things which even a Frenchman does not know. You could spot the men of these and other nationalities even if they were naked in the sea; but

had Colonel Romance been observed under such alarming circumstances, you would have recognised him as an Englishman only by that indefiniteness which is mistakenly termed nonchalance, and by the absence of splash, even though he were sinking.

Like most English gentlemen, he had received very little education of a scholastic kind, and hence his common sense had had full opportunity for development. He had brains as well, of course: quite a lot; but he did not use them overmuch. Brains in a cavalry officer are nearly bad form. He had been sent as a boy to a famous school, where he had learned the three things which the English best know how to teach—namely, fair-play, the futility of logic, and the importance of a sense of humor. He had there learnt, also, to play or to take interest in a variety of games with a ball, such as the English game of cricket, the Norman game of football, the French games of tennis and billiards, the Persian game of golf, the Indian game of polo, and the Spanish game of rackets. Incidentally, he had been taught sufficient Latin to make it possible for him to mistranslate Cæsar's account of his wars in Gaul, sufficient Greek to do the same with Xenophon's story of the retreat from Persia, sufficient chemistry nearly to blow his head off on one occasion, a few sentences of French and German ("I wish a ham"—"With pleasure: how many do you wish?"), some elementary arithmetic and algebra, the latter, by the way, being an Arabic science, the first book of Euclid, as taught in ancient Egypt, the Jewish Scriptures, some Lays of Ancient Rome, the dates of the Norman kings of England, and a little geography, including the rivers of India, the capital cities of South America, and the chief Norwegian Fjords.

With this almost weird equipment he had been sent to a crammer, who had managed to pass him into Sandhurst; and thence he had entered the Army, being stationed first at Khartoum, then in South Africa, and afterwards on the Afghan Frontier. He was a lieutenant when the war began, and a major at G.H.Q., with letters after his name, when it ended. Later, he had been stationed in India again, on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief; and now, a colonel at the age of forty, red-tanned in the face, and glowing with the pride of Empire and a very successful military career, he was enjoying six months' leave before returning again to India to take up what he fervently believed to be the white man's burden.

Thus, though his range of knowledge was not great, it included pickings from many lands; and this, together with his English heritage of mixed blood, gave him that fellow-feeling for, and consequent easy treatment of foreigners, which, during the war, was so often mistaken by them for insular rudeness. The Englishman is perhaps the only person in Europe who has no hatred in his heart towards any other people, but, rather, delights in praising foreign ability, and has an inane and patronising smile for every foreigner. That is the reason why he is so generally disliked.

The first of the two outstanding themes of this story is now apparent—namely, that a modern Englishman is the product of mixed marriages, and that, physically, there is no such thing as a standard English type. He is not a little stock man with a bullet-head, nor a fair-haired giant, nor a man of any other particular species: he is just nondescript. The characteristics which mark him as an Englishman come from his English outlook, his English training, his English ideals; and, just as in the case of the people

of the United States of America, that for which he stands, that which quite unconsciously he keeps inviolate, is his outlook, not his breed.

In nature and temperament Englishmen are extremely diverse, though they seem to have in common a certain freedom and clarity of outlook consonant with the well-known saying that a mongrel is more intelligent than a thoroughbred; but the limited scope given to the individual in their training has produced some sort of outward similarity amongst them, and, indeed, there are certain traits which are so frequently to be observed that they may perhaps be termed national characteristics. For example, the English are, on the whole, more romantic and emotional than the people of less mixed race, and have a greater sense of the dramatic and the spectacular than any pure-blooded nation could possibly have; and Colonel Romance, bless his heart, was no exception.

What other country could have produced Kipling or the Salvation Army, or could have invented, devised, and carried out the overwhelmingly tragic and beautiful ceremony of the Burial of the Unknown Soldier, and the Two Minutes' Silence, or could have wrung all hearts by causing the little dog "Cæsar" to be led through the streets behind the coffin of Edward the Seventh? What other nation could have transformed our late sovereign lady Victoria into a figure of romance, or General Gordon into a saint, or King Charles into a martyr, or Colonel Lawrence into a "Prince of Mecca," or Kitchener into a God of War? What other nation would have dressed up the Guards again in scarlet uniforms after six years or so of drab sanity?

What race but the English could have produced such fantastic personages as Cecil Rhodes, who

dreamed of Empires, and lies entombed, at his own request, upon the highest peak of a lonely range of African mountains; or Nelson, who described the hour of battle as "the full tide of happiness," and, when mortally wounded, begged his sailor friend to kiss him good-bye, and commended his mistress, another man's wife, to the care of the nation; or the explorer, Scott, who, freezing to death amidst the horrifying blizzards of the Pole, electrified the world with his description of the death of that "very gallant gentleman," Captain Oates; or Lady Hester Stanhope, who ruled the wild tribes of the Lebanon as a white sorceress; or the sailor-poet, Sir Walter Raleigh, who, standing before the crowd and feeling the edge of the axe which was to behead him, laughed, "This is a sharp medicine, but it certainly will cure all diseases"; or Mr. Brooke, who made himself Rajah of the head-hunters of Sarawak?

What other nation could have produced Colonel Romance, who was quite a rich landowner, and enjoyed pottering around his little estate in Kent, discussing turnips with farmers, and yet went soldiering in faraway lands for the fun of the thing; who had remained a bachelor because he had lost his heart at three-and-twenty to a girl who died, and yet who was always having desperate flirtations and "affairs"; who was a practcial man of business, and yet whose dream it was to go in search of Captain Kidd's hidden hoard, or to recover the gold from a sunken Spanish ship of Armada days, or to hunt for King John's treasure in the Wash, or to dig up some long-forgotten Queen of Egypt?

The conglomerate English have poetry in their hearts, in most cases, and their hard heads are often stuffed with dreams. Their splendid and widely

derived visions have carried them all over the world, and have led them to lands so remote and so strange that ordinary soldiers and pioneers have seemed to play their parts in fairy-tales, and have left romantic legends and myths behind them. No pure nation could have produced the wild music, the magic, of such poems as "Khubla Khan," or "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," or the "Ode to the West Wind." No scholars other than Englishmen could have translated the Hebrew Scriptures into language more beautiful than the original. William Shakespeare, the greatest poet the world has known, had the true, variegated English mind—Heaven's ha'p'orth of all-sorts.

Yet, according to the custom of the present time, the English are restrained, shy of their dreams, nervous lest their emotions be observed. In the darkness of the theatre you may see Englishmen struggling with tears which in other country would be so easily called forth nor checked with such embarrassment. Loving dash and courage, the soldiers of no other nation have made such fun of heroics, or have died with so little fuss. Brilliant masters of quick movement—as was shown in the Palestine campaign against the Turks, which was the most dashing, the most elegant, piece of fighting in the whole war—Englishmen habitually decry themselves as slow and taciturn muddlers. Enjoying martial music and a bit of display, the armies of no other nation have gone so quietly to battle. Fervently patriotic, no men are so shy of anniversaries and celebrations as are the English: no men jest about their country as we do. Colonel Romance's comments on England left a trail of laughter behind them; yet in the war he was dedicated body and soul to his country, and would

proudly have died for the land which was the butt of his jokes.

Extremely prone to love-sickness, Englishmen are to outward seeming the least demonstrative lovers in the world, though how they behave in privacy is a strictly guarded secret, of which we gain an inkling only when some passionate letter is read in the divorce court, or a man or woman is found with a bullet through the brain. Intensely excitable, Englishmen are, at the present day, more orderly and controlled than the men of any other race; and only those who have seen them dancing like lunatics in the streets, as they did at the relief of Mafeking, or at the announcement of the Armistice with Germany, could possible be aware of their true nature. Incorrigible idealists, Englishmen ever pretend that they are hard-headed shopkeepers; and they prefer to think of London as the storehouse of wealth rather than as the cradle of that which as produced the wealth—namely, Vision.

Even so was Colonel Romance. Under a quiet and somewhat retiring exterior beat the heart of a rhapsodist. He saw things more often as they ought to be than as they were, and he was unwilling to face the crude facts of life or to call a spade a spade. He disliked the word "stomach," for instance, and always felt extremely uncomfortable if the conversation turned—as it so often did in India—to such matters as dysentery or adultery. He believed in the divine right of Kings, the inherent purity of women, the loyalty of India, the freedom-bestowing qualities of the Union Jack, God's enthusiasm for the Church of England, the social benefits of a cold bath in the morning, and all the other illusions of the English idealist.

He was a man of great generosity and kindness of heart, and there was generally a merry twinkle in his eye. He possessed the English sense of humor—the sense of nonsense, it might be called—which is quicker and more subtle than that of any other people. Who but an Englishman could have conjured an "Ole Bill" out of the misery of Flanders? When certain prisoners of war desired to sing the Hymn of Hate, who but an English officer would have obligingly played the harmonium for them, as Colonel Romance was seen to do one day when he was resting after that famous fight in which the dapper little man had killed about a dozen Germans with his own hand? Mr. Charles Chaplin, an English comedian with a purely English sense of fun, has made the whole world rock with laughter; and the nonsense of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear set a lasting fashion in humor wherever the English tongue was understood. England has been "Merrie England" since the far-off days; and in no other country would a Harry Lauder have received the official recognition of the honor of Knighthood.

In a word, Colonel Romance possessed those characteristics which are very frequently to be found in Englishmen, and, in a sense, he was England in epitome. He was paradoxical, brave, adventurous, idealistic, good-natured, poetic, modest, shy, laughing, a lover of nonsense, a good friend, an enemy without hatred, a man of little profound intellectuality but of much natural culture, a product of many types boiled down into one of those inconspicuous, nondescript beings, who, as Sir John Seeley remarks, seem to have conquered and peopled half the world in a fit of absence of mind.

In this story of his great love, however, there is one

characteristic which stands out—namely, his refusal to face crude facts in regard to matters of sexual relationship; and here we come to the second theme which is to be emphasized in the narration of the following strange events. The whole subject made Colonel Romance feel uncomfortable, except when it was veiled by wit or by beauty.

Very few Englishmen will admit that they share their sex-instincts with the beast of the field; and to them the word "love" usually means something very much larger than a bedroom could contain. Colonel Romance would have been greatly shocked had it been inspired merely by what are termed the brute passions; and he would have denied, with honesty, such a suggestion. He might almost have denied the existence of brute passions. Englishmen and Americans (the latter being entirely English in this respect) have set their face, for example, against any legal recognition of the profession of the demi-mondaine. They dislike that sort of thing, and they will only admit it in secret, though they know that it abounds around them in indecent flagrancy.

Englishmen, having very refined and sensitive natures, are even beginning to boggle at the marriage service, because the Prayer Book makes the indelicate assertion that marriage is a means of legalizing the indulgence of these passions. They hate to think that marriage has so necessary a reason. Colonel Romance, in whose person the great mixture of races had produced a highly civilized being, even objected in his hidden heart to the idea of a wedding ceremony, because it was such a public affair, and to a wedding day, because it set a definite time to a natural occurrence which ought to be spontaneous, and which was liable to become ugly unless it was a response to

Nature, and not to social arrangements. He saw no way out of it, of course, more especially because he was a God-fearing man, with an honest belief in the sanctity of family life; but the crudity of the proceeding had helped to keep him a bachelor for many years longer than was right or proper. It was not that he was pure-minded or a prude: it was only that when the thing became personal it became his own private affair; and in this respect he exemplified the general and increasing tendency to welcome the unpremeditation of the special licence, and the obscurity of the registry-office, even though the blessing of God and the Church are most earnestly desired.

With these introductory remarks, then, the story of Colonel Romance's romance may be begun.

Chapter II *Out of the Band*

THE narrative may be opened, as is customary, by the entrance of the butler into the empty drawing-room. He glanced around him to see that all was as it should be; walked over to the fireplace; poked the smoking fusion of the coal into a sudden blaze; rearranged the chrystanthemums in the vase upon the writing-table; and having, with a few further touches, exhausted his domestic imagination, stood awhile upon the hearth-rug in a sort of melancholy abstraction. An autumnal haze which hung over the streets outside had brought dusk before it was due, and this twilight at the window, contrasted with the jumping firelight within, added a certain mystery to an otherwise ordinary Mayfair drawing-room.

The room was typically English of the better class, that is to say, it contained a few pieces of good old English furniture almost lost amidst an assemblage of mellow-toned articles from many other countries; for Mrs. Garrett, the tenant of this little Queen Anne house, being American born, yet having lived in England so long that she knew far more about the English than the English knew about themselves, was a very sound exponent of the international character of English taste. Here in this particular room there were Bokhara rugs upon the floor; Italian damask curtains at the windows; a Dutch-Chinese lacquer bureau and tallboy; a French monastery table; some

Chinese panels, Japanese prints, old Russian and Greek ikons, and early Dutch and Italian paintings upon the walls; old Spanish and Italian carved and gilded candlesticks and other woodwork; some Chinese vases, Bohemian yellow glass, Damascus tiles, and Persian book-covers; a piece of embroidery from Rhodes, and some old French silks; a modern Balkan statuette sculptured in wood; an Egyptian waste-paper basket; brass fire-dogs from Belgium, and so forth. Yet the room, by very reason of this blending, was, as has been said, typically English. For fashionable England to-day is as speciously cosmopolitan as sixty years ago it was solidly German.

The heavy curtains had not yet been drawn, and the butler, walking silently across to the windows, stared in profound gloom at the street outside. He did not like London; he preferred Mrs. Garrett's little house at the foot of the Sussex Downs between Amberley and Arundel, where the grey river winds amongst the flat pastures, and the sea is not far off. There, indeed, was England (in spite of a Roman Catholic ducal family, and a consequent trail of people in black); but here in London the feeling was alien—the Swiss hair-dresser, the Algerian shop where the coffee had to be bought, the Armenian cigarette-maker, the Belgian sewing-woman, the French dressmaker, the Swedish masseuse, and the talk about the Russian Ballet and the German Opera, and this foreign-looking young person, Miss Miriam Marcos, who was just now Mrs. Garrett's guest.

True, the street itself looked English enough, though he had heard it said that the houses were built in the style introduced from the Netherlands by Dutch William, and the church at the end was early Georgian and quite Hanoverian. He looked at the

foggy haze, and was somewhat comforted: that, at any rate, was English. It was like a soft veil which muffled the roar of the traffic in the adjacent thoroughfare; it was like an influence soothing all things to peace. It was a materialization of the spirit of England itself, romantic, gentle, undefined, visionary, obscuring the hard facts of life, serene and content.

He pulled the curtains together with a tragic and lordly sweep of his hand. As he did so the distinctive sound of a taxi-cab made itself heard, and he paused to listen. It stopped below the window. Thereat he passed into the hall outside, and thence to the door.

Mrs. Garrett, a handsome, fair-haired, blue-eyed, downright, practical, well-read, sensible sort of woman of middle age, entered the house, followed by her guest, Miriam Marcos. The latter was a beautiful, dark-eyed, dark-haired Latin or even Jewish-looking girl, but graceful and lithe in carriage, and having no tendency to fatness. Yet, though slender, she was quite mature, not to say tropical, in figure, having a firm, ample bosom like that of Egyptian goddess. One might have supposed her to be three- or four-and-twenty, and married; but actually she was only nineteen, though nobody would have believed it. Her skin was like ivory, but, without the aid of cosmetics, she had a pretty color in her cheeks, and her lips were like a thread of scarlet. Her teeth were superb.

"Has anybody called?" asked the elder woman, as she removed her cloak which had shielded her from the chill of this damp October day.

"Nobody in particular, ma'am," replied the butler, in a voice of icy distinctness.

Mrs. Garrett glanced at the cards which lay upon the tray, and together the two women entered the

drawing-room, the door being closed after them by the butler with a noiselessness which had been the study of years.

"William, my butler, is a Socialist," said Mrs. Garrett. "It gives him great satisfaction to speak of social celebrities as 'nobody in particular.' If I were a duchess instead of a mere American widow of an English doctor, he would probably be rude to me, for, as you know, the motto of Socialism in this country is, 'I'm as rude as you.'" She held her small, neatly shod feet out to the fire, lifting her skirt with unconscious immodesty. "I never can quite understand the English democratic point of view. Over here the working man 'views' says: 'I'm a plain man, I live in a slum, I seldom have a bath, I drink my beer at the pub, I call everything "bloody," I hate the gentry and the rich, and I shall always remain what I am.' The working man in America, on the other hand, says: 'I am a potential gentleman, and some day, if I have any luck, I shall speculate in oil, join the ranks of the rich, and perhaps become President of the United States.'"

Mrs. Garrett recklessly pulled off her elegant little hat and tossed it across the room; then sank into the depths of an enormous armchair in front of the fire, and, putting her feet upon the high box wherein the logs were kept, lit a cigarette luxuriously. The girl, weary with much sight-seeing, followed her example, and sank upon the hearthrug like a tired little dancer, holding her hands out to the grateful blaze. She reminded her hostess somewhat of Pavlova as the dying swan.

"Englishmen are so contradictory," Mrs. Garrett mused, staring into the fire and emitting smoke from her mouth as she spoke, like a nice kind dragon.

"They are at heart the only really democratic people in the world, and yet the working men over here have not a tenth part of the ambition ours have in America. There is a continual individual pushing upwards from the ranks in the States, quite apart from mass movements. Perhaps it is our enormous Jewish population that has taught our people to climb, to try to better themselves socially. Jews always get what they can out of the golden calf, and start climbing Sinai. By the way, Miriam, are you a Jewess?"

The girl gave her a quick glance. "No," she answered, shortly.

"Your name sounds rather Jewish," the elder woman explained. "But you don't really look like a Jewess, beautiful though you are." She stroked the girl's head. "Nice hair . . ." she murmured, and for some moments continued to emit smoke from her mouth in silence.

She had made the acquaintance of Miriam Marcos through a gap in the hedge at the bottom of her garden in Sussex. The adjoining property was rented by a retired Anglo-Indian official and his wife, who, it seemed, augmented their slender resources by taking the girl as a paying guest, her father a widower, being stationed in Egypt, and therefore unable to supervise the completion of her education. Mrs. Garrett had liked the smouldering, passionate looks of her, and had been entertained by her slow, deliberate, intelligent way of talking; and when, later, they met again at a neighboring tennis-party, permission had been obtained for this little jaunt to London.

This permission, by the way, had at first been withheld, and had only been granted after a display of irritation on the girl's part which showed her new

friend that there was a volcano blazing beneath her quiet, sultry exterior.

Miriam, of course, had to be taken more or less on trust, for neither the girl herself nor her temporary guardians seemed inclined to talk much about her private affairs, and little else could be gleaned beyond the facts that her father held an important position in the Egyptian Government, and that this daughter of his had been sent home at an early age and had not left England again since that time. Mrs. Garrett, however, was not by nature curious, and accepted her protegee as she appeared to be, that is to say, as a clever, quiet nice-mannered and exceedingly attractive young woman, living under the care of perfectly respectable, if somewhat dull and unexpansive, people, who were on the calling list of the squire, the parson, the doctor and the other leading lights of the village.

Presently, in the distance, the stirring music of a military band became audible, and, as it drew nearer, the girl rose quietly to her feet, apparently without the aid of her hands, walked to the window, and parted the curtains.

"It's only the Guards," said Mrs. Garrett, maintaining her seat, in order to give her guest the impression that she was by now indifferent to these ordinary London thrills; though, had she been alone, she would have bounded to the window and flung it open. "They often pass along this street on their way to and from the barracks. Open the window, dear, and have a look at them."

Miriam did so, and, leaning out, watched the troops as they emerged in solid formation out of the hazy distance, headed by the band, and flanked on either side by a little group of enthralled listeners, hurrying bravely along, in step to the inspiring march.

Nearer they came, like figures coming into focus on a lantern-screen, until in a blaze and crash of lustry music they passed the house. Miriam's eye had been attracted for some moments by the figure of a smallish man who was stepping out in time to the music; he was swinging along a little in front of the other enthusiasts on the near side of the road, his shoulders squared, his head back. She noticed him first, as he materialised out of the grey English fog because he was very well dressed, and was, for that reason, a conspicuous contrast to the shabby people who were following the band and the little urchins who ran along in the gutter. She could see the expression on his face as he passed by, and it was apparent that he was thinking huge thoughts and dreaming tremendous dreams: who, indeed, could fail to do so, with all that brazen uproar and those riotous drums beating upon the ears? His face was red with the joy of it, and with the spanking pace at which he had come down the long street; but his eyes were like those of a blind man, fixed on another scene, and he seemed to walk right through or over the small boys who ran about him: it was quite certain that he was not conscious of them.

He had passed the house, and she was watching his neat back view, when suddenly he paused—came down to earth—and at once was nearly knocked down and trampled upon by the rest of the visionaries, all equally blind. Somehow or other, he managed to swing himself clear; and Miriam saw him march, still in step to the band, straight to Mrs. Garrett's front door. He might have been an incarnated piece of the music, shot off at a tangent.

The bell rang. "It's the dearest little man," she called out, turning to her hostess. "He rang the bell

in time to the music. I don't think he's a visitor. I think he only wants to say 'Hurry!' to somebody."

"Where did he come from?" Mrs. Garrett asked, throwing the end of her cigarette into the fire, and preparing to rise, as the sound of footsteps in the hall outside was heard.

"He came out of the band, out of the fog . . ." the girl whispered. She had a habit of saying things in a low, husky voice, which made them sound portentous.

The butler opened the drawing-room door ceremoniously, and stood aside.

"Colonel Romance," he announced.

Colonel Romance entered the room, and, going over to Mrs. Garrett, kissed her affectionately upon the cheek which she had presented to him for that purpose, while she herself kissed the air.

"Well, Mary dear," he said. "I heard you were in Town, and felt I must come and see you."

"That's a good boy," she answered. "Let me introduce you to Miss Marcos. Miriam, this is my brother-in-law, Robert Romance—*Colonel* Romance. To be precise, he is my late husband's half-brother. You were quite right, he *is* the dearest little man."

"I don't understand . . ." he murmured, as he took the girl's hand. He hated to be called "little," and, anyway, he was always rather shy at first in the presence of women. They were such a funny shape.

"I was watching you marching along beside the band," said Miriam. "You seemed to be in a dream."

"I was," he laughed. "I had extended the frontiers of the British Empire to the uttermost parts of the earth, when I suddenly remembered that I had come out to call at this house. Under the influence of that wretched band I had even engineered an alliance with the United States."

"That was some dream," said his sister-in-law, dryly. "Americans are taught from childhood to regard England as a tyrant they have cast off."

"True," he replied, seating himself at Mrs. Gar-

rett's direction; "but they are English at heart, even if they don't know it. In the War of Independence they proved that they were Englishmen; they did the only thing English gentlemen could have done at that time—they revolted. Washington and his men were English, and they gave a damned good hiding to German George and his Hessian troops. If they hadn't been English, there wouldn't have been any revolution, and there wouldn't have been any United States."

"That may be," said Mrs. Garrett, "but, nowadays, the American nation is a mixture of nationalities."

"Not more of a mixture than we were at Agincourt," he answered, "and made up of much the same elements—British, Italian, Scotch, German, Scandinavian, French, and so on." He turned to Miriam, and was pleasantly aware that he was not shy of her now. "You must excuse us," he smiled. "My sister-in-law and I always argue in this way the instant we meet. What was it last time, Mary?"

"Let me see . . . the Church of England, wasn't it:"

"Oh yes, of course. I said its strength lay in its adaptability. I said its slogan was 'God, to suit all tastes.'"

"And I said the strength of the Catholics lay in their motto, 'God as we represent Him, or damnation'—their refusal to adapt themselves to people's whims," she answered. "I always admire the Catholics, though I belong to the English Church. In America I used to be a Baptist, but over here I soon realized that religion was a social affair, and that the Nonconformists were people whom nobody but Christ could possibly know. But I don't think the Church of

England is wise to allow such extremes of High and Low: it must make the Bishops feel like indiarubber. What do you think, Miriam?"

"I don't see how an English state Church could be rigid," she replied at once, speaking in her slow, positive way. "The British Empire is one vast compromise, based on the idea that every man may go his own way and think for himself, so long as he eats marmalade for breakfast and dresses for dinner."

"Good!" Colonel Romance exclaimed. He looked at Miriam with interest. Here was a sensible girl; and pretty, too, by Jove! *Lovely*, in fact. Not very English in appearance, perhaps; but so many English people looked Latin. She was as dark as a Stuart; there was a bit of Charles the Second in her, perhaps, for his descendants were legion. Or a Manners: some of the Manners men looked like organ-grinders. Or the Dukes of Norfolk: the last one was as black as a Greek. Or . . . but she was wilting under his steady gaze.

He turned to his sister-in-law. "Am I too late for tea?"

Mrs. Garrett smiled. "The Englishman makes no compromise about his tea, at any rate," she said. "Yes, dear, it will be here in a minute."

"It is a Chinese custom," Colonel Romance remarked, "but we have made it our own, and we are taught to want it from childhood. Englishmen used to drink sack, and men of our own blood in America drink only coffee. It just depends on how you are brought up. Isn't that so?" He turned to Miriam.

"Everything depends on that," she answered, with emphasis, but without movement. "People of different nationalities, brought up in the same way, will be the same, or act the same, or pretty nearly so."

The statement—nothing of much importance in itself, nothing new—seemed to come up out of her mouth from an oracular well of wisdom; it was authoritative, like the boom of the gun that announces twelve o'clock, and everybody sets their watches. It issued pat from her pretty lips, as though she had said it many a time to herself. He felt that she ought to have added: "Any further enquiries must be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope."

He looked at her with awed interest. "I wonder if you are right. Do you mean that a stolid Englishman, brought up from boyhood in France would wave his arms about, and blow kisses to the ladies?"

"Yes, of course," she answered. "I know a Jewish boy, educated at Elton. He is a perfect specimen of the stern, silent English gentleman. His father began life in Smyrna, dressed in native robes." She did not look at him; she looked into the fire, and the fire gave her the appearance, he thought, of a heathen idol.

"I have often thought that the case of the Jews must have been very hard during the war," Mrs. Garrett observed. "There were Jews fighting in the ranks of all the belligerent armies; and Jew must often have met Jew in battle, each upholding the traditions of the land of his adoption."

"Poor devils!" said Colonel Romance. "They hated fighting, too. Often they were in the deuce of a funk, but they had to stick it, or lose their social status, and they stuck it like heroes. Many of them, I dare say, would much rather have held their hands up, like Moses. Moses, you remember, once held his hands up during the entire battle: the Bible says so."

"Oh, the Jews were always splendid fighters," Mrs.

Garrett corrected him, not without sternness. "Look at David and Goliath."

"Now, don't rake up that unfortunate affair," laughed Colonel Romance.

"How d'you mean?" his sister-in-law asked.

"Well," he said, "a mighty swordsman steps out from the enemy's ranks, and, according to the ancient laws of chivalry, offers to settle the issue between the two armies by single combat; and then comes David, and, while Goliath is spitting on his hands, gets him straight in the eye wth a pebble, at long range, before the wretched man had even drawn his sword. Oh, a dirty trick!"

"Hush!" whispered Mrs. Garrett. "You mustn't say these things before a young girl. You'll undermine her faith."

Miriam laughed. "No, really," she protested, "I agree with him. Jews, and most of the other peoples from the East end of the Mediterranean, are often awfully nervous. You see, a nervous man is generally a man with an imagination and an artistic temperament: he isn't stupid like so many brave Englishmen are. The Jew who joined up, and fought well, as so many of them did, deserves one's respect, because he was probably sick with fright, and didn't show it. That's a much finer thing than behaving like a hero because you're unconscious of the danger."

"Good!" said Colonel Romance, once more. "I agree with you." She shrugged her shoulders as though to say that the thing was self-evident.

Presently William brought in the tea; and soon the three were hunched around the fire, eating buttery muffins with a will. Colonel Romance's chair was a little behind that in which Miriam was seated; and he was thus able to watch her face, lit by the firelight.

He admired it immensely; he was enthralled by it. He looked so long, in fact, that presently Mrs. Garrett surreptitiously kicked his shin under the table, and shook her head at him, gravely, when he started round.

"You're very silent," she said.

"I was thinking," he replied. "Perhaps it is a nation's ideal, the ideal taught at school, rather than the breed, which makes it what it is."

"Of course," said Miriam, without turning her eyes from the fire. "It is mainly a question of education."

Again the well of wisdom! She was evidently a young woman with views. You put a penny in the slot, and the figure worked; her answers were all tabulated as in the machine that tells your fortune.

"That's an awful thought," he commented, "because the one thing we English can never bother about is propaganda and patriotic education."

"In America we think of little else," said Mrs. Garrett. "The process is called 'Americanization.' It consists, in the main, of teaching the children English ideals, and telling them they are not English."

"I wonder if education could change a nation's tendencies," Colonel Romance mused. "I mean, whether we could educate the Egyptian peasants, for instance, into honest men."

"Why not?" Miriam asked. "Englishmen are notoriously honest now, simply owing to an ideal of honesty having been taught to them."

"Oh, but honesty was inherent in them," he expostulated, feeling that here, at any rate, she had slipped.

"No, it wasn't," Miriam answered. "I've just been reading about the South Sea Company, when the highest ministers in the land were up to their eyes in the fraud. That was in 1720."

"Take the proverbial English kind-heartedness

for that matter," said Mrs. Garrett, who, being American, had an encyclopædic knowledge of small facts. "It was not much over a hundred years ago that the bill for the abolition of the slave trade and its horrors was proposed by Pitt and rejected by Parliament; and Parliament even less than a hundred years ago threw out the bill for the suppression of bear-baiting and other cruelties. And it was only a few generations ago that Englishmen were burning Englishmen at the stake. The breed was the same in those days; but Miriam is right, the ideal was different."

"Take the famous English self-control and imperturbability," said Miriam. "At our house in Sussex the other day I found a book called *Passages from the Diary of a Physician*, published, I think, in 1832. The pages are full of exclamations such as 'O horror!' 'Alas! alas!' and so on. Men utter screams, or choke or suffocate with emotion; they fall senseless to the floor, or sink swooning on chairs and sofas; they stagger blindly from the room, the tears welling from their eyes; they shiver and shudder and sigh, or they have hysterics. And these were ordinary English male characters. But a different ideal has changed all that. It is just Fashion."

"Well then, Fashion won the war," said the Colonel; "the English fashion of self-control."

"'And Fashion began it," Mrs. Garrett remarked; "the German fashion of ruthlessness. The Germans were quite a nice people a hundred years ago."

"'Here's another point," said Miriam. "English people are supposed to be very clean and very fond of bathing, and yet hardly an English house had a bathroom fifty years ago, I am told. You complain about Indians and Egyptians and those sort of people being

dirty; but that could all be changed in a generation, just as it has been changed in England. It's not the breed; it's the ideal."

Mrs. Garrett put her legs up on the wood-box and lit another cigarette. "Well," she observed, "it is obvious that the ideals of women change, so why shouldn't men's standards also change? The ideals of our grandmothers are not those of the women of to-day. Look at my cigarette; look at the amount of leg I am showing. My grandmother would have had an attack of the vapors if she had seen me now. . . . The prudish British matron has almost vanished."

"The veiled woman of the East is disappearing," said Miriam, and her voice sounded like a chant, the words like a prophecy. ("Rejoice, O daughters of Israel! . . .")

There was silence for a while. The little Colonel felt that his brain was struggling with a new fact, a lot of new facts. This foreign-looking girl who had now drunk her tea, and finished her muffins, and had sucked her delicate fingers (sucked them very prettily, too), and was leaning back, gazing into the fire like a sorceress into a crystal, seemed to him more than ever to be a sort of ancient oracle, hinting obscurely at great truths. He had always recognized that the English were a mixed race; but this cross-breeding he had felt had produced a prize breed, a lord of the earth. Now this girl was suggesting that it was not the breed which had made the Englishman what he was, but the point of view he was taught. She was suggesting that anybody, any foreigner, educated in our way should also be a king amonst men. It was a logical thought, too, seeing that Englishmen themselves were so mixed. The King was an Englishman, though he had hardly a drop of English blood in his

veins; the Keppels, the Bentincks, the Weigalls, and many others who came from Holland in 1698 were English; the Harcourts were descended from a Dane; Denbigh and the Fieldings were descended from the Royal Hapsburg family; the Wyndhams from a Saxon; the Percys from a Dane; the Greys from a Knight of Picardy; and so forth. And what was the difference between an Englishman, an Irishman, a Welshman, and a Scot, each living in England and educated at an English school and university? There was none. Yet, surely, the breed counted for something.

He repeated it aloud. "Surely the breed counts."

Miriam shrugged her shoulders. "The Egyptians," she said, "are the same people now as they were in the days of the Pharaohs. They are a pure race; but their ideals have changed and they have therefore fallen from their greatness."

Mrs. Garrett nodded assent. "Look at the Greeks and Romans. Their character has changed, but the race is much the same as it was, in both cases. Yes, I suppose it all depends on the kind of teaching, the standards aimed at, the ideals. In America, of course, we definitely say so. We say it doesn't matter whether your father was a Pole or a Greek or a German or anything else: once you have been brought under the influence of the Stars and Stripes you become a good American. It is curious, isn't it, that the two great races of the world, the two outstanding peoples, are the British hotchpotch and the American hotchpoth? The pure races, such as the Germans and French, can't begin to compete with us mongrels."

Colonel Romance scratched his head. "This is getting too deep for me," he protested, a little bewildered. "Are we saying that our greatness is

due to our mixed breed, or to our particular form of training?" He looked from one to the other.

"I think we're saying both," said Miriam. "I think we mean that a good Englishman or a good American can be made out of any healthy material, and, in fact, that the more mixed the material the more intelligent and responsive to training it is."

"Good Lord!" muttered the Colonel. "I think I had better go home and play 'Rule, Britannia' on the piano."

He did not, however, go home at once. He stayed where he was until it was time to dress for dinner, until it was too late to do so, until Mrs. Garrett invited him to have dinner with them, just as he was, and until nearly midnight after that. And when at last he was more or less pushed out of the house he was already head over ears in love.

His mood was much too celestial to be taken home and drowned in a novel and sleep, and he therefore decided to drive it in a taxi to a night club; but in view of the fact that he was dressed in day clothes he selected a small club in Soho to which he was an occasional visitor. The place was run on French lines, which pleased him as an Englishman.

As he entered the long, narrow dancing-room, with its dishevelled group of tables at the near end, and the crowd of revolving couples beyond, reflected to reeling infinity in the gilt-framed mirrors which covered the walls, he saw at once that this was a gala night—quite a carnival, in fact, judging by the discomfort and the mess. A negro jazz-band was performing at the far end of the room, and its deafening noise, combined with the squeaking of the squeaks, the whistling of the whistles, and the trumpeting of the penny trumpets, produced a hellish noise which was

as invigorating to the newcomer as it must have been nerve-racking to those who had already suffered it for an hour or two.

He looked about him to see if he could find a face he knew, but the management had supplied most of the women with small black masks, in order, it is to be supposed, to hide any damning respectability of features which they might possess and, likewise, false noses had been served out to the men to enhance, where necessary, their natural indecorum. Moreover, a profusion of paper caps and other pretty conceits, balloons, paper ribbons, and so forth, helped to confuse his eyes and to make any identification of a friendly face difficult.

Still this was life—*French* life; and he smiled cheerily upon it, ready to throw himself into it at the first opportunity.

A fat man wearing a long red nose, and, beside him, a scantily-dressed woman, whose face was so thoroughly naughty that she needed no mask, were seated at one of the tables at the far side of the room; and presently Colonel Romance was fluttered to see the later rise from her seat and come over to him.

'My friend 'e say 'e know you, and will you some fizz wiz 'im:" she said, taking his hand and leading him forward, while yet he was framing a dignified and suitable reply. When he reached the table, the fat man pushed his false nose up on to his bald forehead, where it rested like the horn of a unicorn, and held out his hand.

"Excuse my getting up," he said. "I'm so damned fat. You're Romance, aren't you? I don't suppose you recognize me. My name's Sam Simmons, Sir Samuel Simmons, to be exact—all sibilants. That's why they knighted me—to make the third. When we

met last, I think I still only had the two, as in 'Ass.'"

"Why, of course!" Colonel Romance replied, shaking his hand. "You're the fellow who wanted to take my leg off, and then thought better of it."

"Yes, we were a bit too ready with the knife, then," he chuckled. "So damned afraid of gangrene. How's the leg now?"

"As sound as the other," the Colonel told him. "Just a scar to remind me of Old Fritz, that's all."

"Well, I hope you won't forget it," he said. "Soldiers are far too forgetful, but surgeons are not, I can tell you! God!—the shambles! . . . Sit down, won't you?" He turned to his companion. "You run along now, my girl. We want to talk."

She leaned forward and gazed poutingly at him. "'Av'n't I was nice to you?" she protested. "What 'ave I 'av'n't done? 'Av'n't I not kiss you? I sink I'd better don't, 'ere."

"No, for the love of Mike, don't kiss me here," he laughed. "Now, go along. Go and have your bun and milk with somebody else. This is a friend of mine, don't you see?—a man I nearly maimed for life, because I thought him too good to take any risks with. *Walked* in with his leg lying open to the bone and full of mud; and all for you, you shameless little Belgian baggage. Be off with you."

She tossed her head like a pony, smiled at them, and was lost in the crowd. Colonel Romance sat himself down in her place.

"What a noise!" he said.

"Sounds like the night we were bombed," his friend remarked. "D'you remember? They knew it was a hospital all right. The swine. . . ."

"Oh, well," he replied, "it was just their training. Nietzsche you know. No pity, and all that sort of rot."

"Don't you believe it! It wasn't their training. It was in their blood. . . . Have a nose?" He pulled his own false nose down on to his face and handed another to Colonel Romance.

"Thanks," said the Colonel, fixing it with gravity over his own neat little nasal organ, and placing the elastic which held it over his head. "What brings you to a noisy place like this?"

"I like noise," the surgeon replied. "I like to see all these English people dancing the dances of savages to music written by American Jews and played by negroes. It's a change after the silence of the operating theatre. I'm supposed to be a very serious fellow, absorbed in my work. They all tremble when I come into the hospital. So I sometimes blow in here, and make myself look a guy, just to lose my self-respect. . . . Have a glass of this champagne: If I take any more myself my hand will be unsteady tomorrow; and I have to disembowel an elderly lady at ten a. m. I shouldn't be at all surprised if I kill her as it is."

"I suppose surgeons do have accidents," said Colonel Romance, a little awed. "Have you ever killed anybody like that?"

"Yes, two or three. I killed a man on purpose once. He was a German spy, shot in the stomach. When I had him lying open on the table, it occurred to me that he was bound to be shot at dawn as soon as he recovered, and I knew he knew it. I couldn't bear to think of the wretched man's misery when he came round, so I cut a bit too deep by mistake. Now, if I'd been a German I should have patched him up and

got him all nice and ready for the firing-party with the greatest pleasure."

"Really, I believe it's a question of training," the Colonel replied, inspired by his recent talk with Miriam Marcos. "We're taught to be merciful, to play the game: the Germans aren't. That's the main difference. What else do we learn at school? We don't learn lessons: we concentrate on this learning to play the game."

"You're right about that," the other agreed. "I never learnt anything of the least use at school in the way of lessons. And Oxford was worse. Oxford!—my God, what a farce! I gave it up after a year, and went in for surgery instead. Those narrow-minded prigs! . . . Damn this nose!" He pushed it on to his forehead once more.

"Why, what's wrong with them?" Colonel Romance asked, holding his nose up and raising his glass to his lips.

"What's wrong? Why, they're out of touch with real life. They live there, amongst those mouldy old colleges, letting off Latin puns at one another and quoting Cicero, and saying that two parallel lines can never meet, until some fellow outside, like Einstein, tells them that they *can* meet. Then they buzz like an excited hive of bees, and presently settle down again to their humdrum routine. No imagination! Intellectually they're like a lot of patients under an anæsthetic, repeating over and over again the things they heard before they went off. Open-mindedness and tradition cannot go together. That's why so many new discoveries are being made by American professors."

"However, there's something to be said for tradition," said Colonel Romance. "It dosn't make

scholars, but it makes gentlemen; and that's England's special contribution to the world."

"I don't agree," Sir Samuel replied. "That sort of gentlemanliness is in the blood It belongs to the nation; it saturates all our walks of life. One is English, and therefore one is decent."

"Well, then, what about the Jews and other foreigners educated in our way? They are not of English stock, but they make very fine Englishmen. Look at Disraeli and many others."

He was consciously trying the effect of Miriam Marcos's views on a solid English patriot, and he shamelessly repeated her argument, so far as he had grasped it, as his own. But though he talked at great length, his theme was not well received. Sir Samuel believed in the race, in the breed. "It's in the blood," he said. "We're tough: we're the same tough race who stuck it out at Waterloo."

"Well, didn't somebody say that Waterloo was won on the playing-fields of Eton?" the Colonel argued.

His friend suddenly banged the table with his fist. "Damn it! I believe I'm doing what the Oxford dons do: shutting my mind to new suggestions. I don't agree with what you say in the least; but I'll think it over. It's a beastly thought . . . *beastly!*" He rose from his seat ponderously, and tossed his false nose across the room. "Well, I'm off to bed. Can I give you a lift? I've got my car outside."

Colonel Romance also removed his nose and followed him out of the din into the silence of the street; but when, presently, he was deposited at his door, a wave of sadness swept over him. He felt excessively lonely. There were many advantages in the blessed state of bachelorhood; but sometimes, as now, he would have given much to be married, to open the door

of his room quietly and to hear a sleepy voice saying, "Is that you, dear, or is it only a burglar?"—to go across to the bed and to bury his face upon the soft, delicious throat of the woman who belonged to him, to feel her bare arm about his neck to make her laugh drowsily by telling her of Sir Samuel and his false nose, to tell her about the little Belgian prostitute. . . . No, he would have to keep that to himself: she would not like it. There would still be loneliness, things he must keep to himself, incidents he must not share. A man is always alone. He is packed off to school as a boy, and is there utterly alone; he makes his way in the world alone; he marries, and is alone, in spite of all his efforts to make his male life explicable to a female mind; and, at the last, he dies alone, hiding his pain from others.

"I do feel glum," he muttered. "I believe I really am in love this time."

THIS was not the first time that Colonel Romance had fallen in love; and he recognized the symptoms with a sort of gloomy mirth. Yet to laugh at himself was of no avail: the malady could no more be laughed away than a toothache. The ancient sadness was upon him, and he knew that only two courses lay open to him: either he must speedily see the girl again, and thus dissolve this fog of misery into the sunshine of joy, or else he must go to Scotland and forget her in the dissipation of a certain pleasant house-party to which he had been invited, where a few days' shooting, some fast tennis on an asphalt court, a lot of bridge, and some jolly girls who loved a "rag," were the main attractions. The thought of the jolly girls settled it; like most men, he feared and detested jolly girls. He would accept his fate and proceed with this affair of the heart, though the sorrows of it overwhelmed him.

Love is Nature's star turn, the old sorceress's cleverest trick. It is a performance in which she brings to bear her whole wagon-load of wiles, for if she fail here, her entire game will be lost. Man must pursue maid and maid must surrender to man, or else, to put it bluntly, there will be no reproduction, and the human race will cease. Therefore Nature's every artifice is concentrated upon this one event. We in England to-day shut that event away; we call it by deceptive names; we hesitate to speak of it; we hide

it from our sons and daughters; we hide it from one another; the lover hides it from himself, declaring that it is only the companionship of the beloved which he desires. Yet, all the time, there it is: the one event upon which all life is based; the one event without which life would cease and earth become as empty as the moon; the one event which Nature is forcing upon her hapless children—forcing, forcing, forcing with all her arts, ceaselessly goading them to it, torturing them to it, pushing them and pulling them towards it.

Primitive and savage peoples make no more bones about it than the cattle of the fields; practical nations, such as the French, veil it very thinly; but the English—the illogical, shy, romantic English—have in modern times placed it amongst the whispered things. This, of course, was not always so, for most things that we call national characteristics are in reality only fashions, phases through which we are passing. We happen to be fairly modest just now, but as late as the end of the eighteenth century English literature was full of plain-speaking, and some of the best periodicals of that age make use of words and phrases which to-day necessitate the keeping of an anti-quary's book-case under lock and key; while even Shakespeare's pure, sweet Juliet calls a spade a spade so frankly that a modern audience gasps to hear her.

Colonel Romance, being English, did not face facts. He did not consciously desire to take Miriam in his arms: he only knew that he wanted to be with her; he only knew that he was feeling unutterably miserable without her. He did not realize that sorrow was an instrument in the hands of Nature, a goad to prod him back into her presence, a trick, a deceptive means to an end. Were the lover to feel no sorrow at ab-

sence from the beloved, the opportunities for intimacy would be decreased; and hence Nature's first effort is to create gloom in the lover's heart when he is alone, to create a bogey to scare him back to the beloved's presence. And, after all, what is Nature in this case but a law of survival? Those who have not felt this sorrow have remained alone, and hence they have failed to reproduce their species, and are now extinct, or appear only sporadically as freaks.

Colonel Romance was no freak: he was an ordinary, average Englishman; and his gloom was profound. "Perhaps it is indigestion," he muttered to himself; but a dose of bicarbonate of soda did him no good. "It may be liver," he said; but an hour's violent exercise in the club gymnasium left him as he had been. "Well, then, it must be love," he decided, and he prepared for the worst.

His first love affair had occurred when he was twenty-three years of age, he being then a subaltern on leave. He and his half-brother, Dr. Garrett (aged twenty-eight), the offspring of his mother's former marriage, had been inseparable friends, until one day there came into their lives a lanky, red-haired girl, with eyes of blazing copper, a hectic flush on her cheeks, and a cough. All three were staying at a summer hotel, where the bedroom opened on to a verandah; and in the moonlight, when the girl's chaperone had gone to bed, they used to sit whispering and chuckling for hours together, the two men, however, growing daily more jealous of one another.

Then one night, when his brother was away, and when the chaperone had insisted on her charge going to bed, he had suggested to her in an undertone that she should pretend to obey, but should return later, after all were asleep. He was rather an innocent

young man in those days, and was very beautifully in love. He went to his room, and there sat smoking his pipe, wondering whether she would come back to resume their talk; and then, of a sudden, she appeared, clad in a flimsy dressing-gown and darted into his bed.

He was exceedingly shocked at being confronted in this manner with definite facts when indefinite fancies alone occupied his mind; he was exceedingly frightened lest the chaperone should wake up, exceedingly embarrassed by the situation—she lying there, all lace and silk and bare arms and tumbling red hair, and he standing by her side in his tidy evening clothes and stiff shirt, the pipe still in his mouth. To him she seemed to be just a reckless, guileless girl, playing some sort of joke upon him; and gradually he froze into an elder brother, a guardian, who preached a little sermon to her about the dangers of such wild conduct—dangers which he said she was too young to understand—and presently made her go back to her own room.

Next day she would not speak to him, but at length, when, with sad heart, he asked her why she was angry, she turned upon him like a wounded tigress. She called him a cad, a boor; said he had played with her feelings, egged her on, and then shamed her; said that anyway she was a dying woman, and why should she not make the most of her time? "You wretched coward! You lukewarm fish!" she cried. "I suppose that is your particular form of vice—just playing on a woman's emotions, and then leaving her." She was certainly frank, and she made him feel an utter beast.

Upon the following day she announced her engagement to his half-brother.

Young Romance was heartbroken; but he kept their secret, and played the game. A month later she developed pneumonia and died, cursing God and all His works, because He had given Robert Romance, the only man she had ever loved, a heart of stone. The two half-brothers followed her to her grave, and there, clasping one another's hand, they wept openly. Twelve months later Dr. Garrett married Mary Lee of Virginia, U.S.A., but Lieutenant Romance swore he would never marry, nor had he done so, though often he had come very near to it. For some years it was understood that his heart was buried in the grave of the red-haired girl; but later it was assumed that it had been disinterred, which was probably true, for it was now aching away like anything in his manly little body. For some years never a white moth flew into his room on a summer's night but he thought of her and started from his chair. For some years he laid a bunch of flowers upon her grave when he was in England, but of late he had forgotten to do so, for all things are vanity, and love, he said, is like the song of a passing bird, remaining in the ears a little while and then fading away.

This new heartache of his, however, had to be accepted, and in the afternoon, therefore, he telephoned to Mary Garrett's house, although he knew that she was to take Miriam back to Sussex that day. He caught her as she was about to start for the station; and to his great joy he received an invitation to spend the week-end with her in the country.

"Come down to-morrow, Friday, afternoon," she said, "and I will ask Miriam to dinner. Then you can resume your disgraceful flirtation with her."

So it was arranged, and on the following evening he found himself at full moon—the most awful time

for a lover—alighting at her door, some thirty minutes before the dinner-hour he so eagerly awaited. But his disappointment was bitter when he heard that Miriam could not come that evening; and by next morning he was in a state of frenzy. By now he had made her a cynosure of his aspirations, an ideal, a personification of his conception of womanhood, and, as a natural consequence, he was overwhelmed by the consciousness of his unworthiness.

What troubled him most was the fear lest his brain were not equal to hers. He had thought quite a lot about things in his own muddled way: he was even considered to be rather a free-thinker, rather original, by his brother officers. They said he was a "brainy" sort of chap. But this girl had replied with a casual "of course" to some of his most daring thoughts. She was such a wise little oracle, as deep as a well; and she had just that suggestion of mystery about her which had always entranced him in women. She had a smile like that of the Sphinx. The search for Captain Kidd's hidden hoard presented no lure comparable to that which her buried treasure offered.

After breakfast he strolled out into the garden to smoke his morning pipe. The foggy prelude of winter had now passed, and the weather was once more hot and summer-like, though the magnificent banks of autumnal cloud gathered above the Downs suggested the possibility of a thunderous finale to the season. A hedge, and beyond it a ditch, divided the garden from that of the house wherein Miriam lived; and here, at a gap in the hedge, he stood staring along the pathway at the far side, which led to a tennis-lawn and to the house of his dreams, nearly hidden by the trees. The morning sun beat upon

his tanned forehead; his pipe was in his mouth; his hands were in his pockets; his eyes were puckered up.

Then, suddenly, he saw her; and his heart leapt within him. She was coming across the lawn, making straight for the pathway. A fox-terrier was trotting in front of her, lost in the pursuit of smells. She did not see him until the dog barked at him; then she waved her hand, and he waved back. It was a wonderful moment.

He glanced at the ditch in front of him, measured the distance, stepped back a few paces, and took a running leap at it, landing, light as a deer, on the other side. A moment later he was wringing her hand like a pump-handle.

"Good gracious me!" she exclaimed, "that's a pretty way to arrive in somebody's else's garden."

"Would you rather there was a great gulf like that between us?" he asked, pointing to the ditch.

"There is," she replied shortly.

"What d'you mean?" he said. It was like a smack in the face.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Let me introduce you to our dog. His name is Admiral Sturdee Stormalong Smut. Smut!—don't sniff his boots like that; he's a friend."

"I hope so," he said, smiling perplexedly at her. "Let's sit down here on the grass and talk. I've been aching to talk to you again. That's why I've come down here. . . . Why couldn't you come to dinner last night?"

"For no particular reason," she replied. "I suppose I didn't want to. I don't know. . . ."

She seated herself on the bank of the ditch, or, rather, one should say that she sank down like a debutante making a curtsey before the King, until

she was seated with her legs crossed under her, tailor-fashion.

"D'you mean to say," he exclaimed, settling himself beside her, "you let me down like that last night for no particular reason?"

She nodded. O shameless Nature!—planning all things with cunning; making the hapless woman hold back, try to escape, in order to add that touch of soreness to the man which shall rouse him to effort; causing her to resist—she knows not why—in order that she may be gripped and bound the more securely.

"Don't you like me?" he asked.

Again that tantalizing shrug. Ah, but Nature does not have it all her own way when she is dealing with a modern Englishman. Had they been living in the Stone Age he would have taken her in his arms, as Nature intended; but nowadays there was this national phase of self-control, this outward inappetency, to be reckoned with, and Nature's trick this time fizzled out.

Colonel Romance laughed and politely changed the subject. "Tell me about yourself," he said. "My sister-in-law says your father lives in Egypt. Very gay place, I am told."

"Very, I believe," she replied. "So that's that."

"Why? Don't you know it well?"

"I haven't been there since I was five," she answered, "so I can't say anything about it. I only remember great heat, and a stuffy house, and a black nurse. My mother died just after I was born, and my father packed me off to England as soon as I was old enough to go."

"But I suppose he sees you when he is on leave?"

"On the contrary. I haven't set eyes on him for eight or nine years. He couldn't leave his post dur-

ing the war, and since then political conditions have been so upset that he has not been able to get away."

"He sounds a conscientious fellow. Or has he made Egypt his home?"

"Yes, Egypt is his home all right," she smiled. "He hates the English climate."

Colonel Romance pictured the man: a yellow-faced, sun-browned, liverish personage, playing bridge at the club in Cairo every night with irritable old generals and high officials. He knew the type in India.

"But he is very good to me," she added. "He has given me a first-class education, and he lets me have plenty of pocket-money; so I have no reason to complain." She sighed. "I suppose he'll want me to come out to him in Egypt soon now. I rather dread that."

"You'll probably marry here," he said. "You're very beautiful, you know, and jolly clever, and awfully . . . er . . . feminine."

She smiled. "That's only because you are so particularly masculine. I don't know what it is about you: you make me want to run away. Perhaps it is that I don't like you."

"Don't you like me?" he asked for the second time.

"Yes, very much," she answered, and they both laughed. Thereafter a silence fell upon them, during which Colonel Romance made friends with the terrier. He was very popular with dogs, for the reason that he treated them as fellow-creatures and not simply as the prey of a masculine love of exacting obedience.

"I've been thinking over our talk the other night," he said, at length. "I don't think I altogether agree with what you were saying about our breed being less important than our methods of education in making us what we are in the world."

"Oh, but I'm sure I am right," she replied, at once joining issue with him. "I have thought about it so very much, so very much. Take, for instance, the Chinese and Japanese. Physically there is very little difference between them: they come of the same parent stock. And yet the Chinese are honest men, with a reputation for honesty in trade, and the Japanese, trained along different lines, are said to be just the reverse. Take the Copts and the Mohammedans in Egypt: they are the same people, both pure ancient Egyptians, only divided by the question of religion. And yet their characters are utterly different. It isn't the breed that gives the character: it is the ideal. Look at the French, a decidedly nervy lot, and yet sublime during the war, when an ideal went before them like a pillar of fire. Look at the Germans: quite a decent people in the days of Beethoven and Schubert and Goethe and Schiller; and fiends incarnate when they had been trained in the school of Nietsche and the modern military party."

The words came slowly, steadily, from her lips, in a continuous flow; but she stared straight before her. Again it was as though she were speaking by rote, almost as though she were delivering a prepared lecture.

"The nations are divided," she went on, "not so much because they are physically different, but because they have different customs, different ideals, different standards in training. You can make Dutchmen into Englishmen; you can make Scotsmen into Germans, like the von Gordons; or Jews into Englishmen; or Norman-English into Irishmen, like the Fitzgeralds; or Greeks into Englishmen, like the Ralli family; or Corsicans into Frenchmen, like Bonaparte; or Moors into Spaniards; or a man of

any nationality into an American. Britain and America, as a matter of fact, are not nations at all: they are points of view; they are institutions."

"Well, then," he said, scratching his head (which was a habit of his), "you don't see any harm in international marriages."

"None whatever," she replied. "The English stock has been produced by them."

"Well, what about Anglo-Indian marriages?"

"They are all right if they are received by society. Some well-known Anglo-Indians are delightful, they say, though I don't much like the idea of marriage between white and brown. Still, I believe there are some very successful marriages between white people in the United States and American Indians."

"What about marriage between white people and negroes?" he asked, beginning to feel uneasy, but determined to know the worst.

"Ah, that is another question," she replied. She had her answer pat. "The negro race are definitely more animal than we are. Intermarriage with them is wrong simply because they are nearer to the ape than we are, and a negro strain eliminates thousands of years of progress. But you can't say that of marriages between Europeans and Jews, or Levantines, or Turks, or North Egyptians. Don't frown! North Egyptians of the upper class are often practically white, you know."

She turned her face to him, and smiled at him, and made an almost imperceptible forward movement towards him, like an invitation to look more deeply into her thoughts. It made him feel as though he were younger than she. It was as though she were saying to him: "Creep into my bosom little man, and learn of me; for I am Woman, and my female

heart can tell you things which male reason can never know of itself."

He stared at her in a baffled manner, shielding his eyes from the sun with his hand. "But surely you are wrong," he protested. "It is surely a question of nerves and stamina. A good, healthy, sober stock is the important thing."

"Yes, of course, that is important," she answered; "but there's good and bad stock, there are healthy and unhealthy families, in every nation. A healthy stock is no good without right teaching; and, vice versa, nervous, excitable stock is able to do all sorts of wonderful things when it is inspired by an ideal. America has proved that. In endurance the great, stolid Germans were no match for the small, excitable Frenchmen at Verdun; and Prussian organization and mass formation shattered itself against a thin line of laughing, careless, impractical Englishmen at Ypres. The English were not superior in physique or stock: they were only superior in their conception of manhood. They were men trained as gentlemen fighting their physical equals trained as cads, and they knocked them into a cocked hat."

"Well, fortunately," he said, "the two greatest races in the world are the British and the Americans; and they have very much the same ideals."

"Yes," she answered, "and, as Mrs. Garrett said the other day, they are the two outstanding instances of mixed breeding. Has it never occurred to you that the ultimate superman will probably be produced by a mix-up of all the civilized nationalities? It seems to me (and, as I say, I've thought about it such a lot) that the two factors which will bring forth the perfect man are a blending of types, and

then a training of the product in the best of English and American ideals."

"Poor France!" he laughed. "You don't give them a look-in, in spite of Verdun."

"They will blend," she replied, "they will contribute. We shall all contribute."

"Well, the family of Romance is mixed enough already," he remarked. "We are English, but I don't know what we were originally. I suppose the origin of Marcos is obscure, too. It sounds Greek."

"Somebody asked me if it was a corruption of the Italian 'Marchese,'" she said. "But I am content to leave it obscure. As you see, I don't think race matters. I am English in point of view, and I'm healthy, and that's all that counts, in my opinion." She sighed.

"What are you sighing about?" he asked. "There's a sort of elusive sadness about you I don't understand."

"I was thinking about Egypt," she answered. "I don't want to go back there. I love England."

"Well, why should you go back?"

"If my father wants me I shall have to go."

"At any rate," he said, "I hope it won't be till my leave is up. I want to see a lot of you. You're . . . .you're simply fascinating. And you make me *think*. Dash it! I haven't thought so much for years."

THAT night she came to dinner, but Colonel Romance, again rather shy of her, was peculiarly tongue-tied, and the conversation was desultory. He did his best to present himself to her in a favorable light, but when a man has a sense of the ridiculous, it is difficult to do so. Moreover, he had an over-developed faculty of self-criticism, which made it quite impossible for him to sing his own praises without listening to himself doing so, and this always embarrassed him, and speedily reduced him to silence.

Conscious of his small stature, he very much wanted to tell her about a tiger he had shot in India under rather peculiar circumstances; because he thought it would reveal him to her as a reliable protector in a crisis. He was perfectly aware—without the least vanity—that he had acted on that occasion in what was called a heroic manner, and had nearly lost his life to save that of a friend; and the tears shed over him afterwards by the rescued man's wife would make, he knew, a most dramatic story. But no sooner had he entered upon the tale than that absurd internal critic began to mock him and to remind him that thus the bores and braggarts talked, the result being that he burlesqued the whole story, and reduced it to silliness.

He would have liked her to know, too, that he was a really first-rate polo player; for girls always think

that very grand, and he was most anxious to be grand in her eyes. But it was no use; he could not bring himself to say more than that he was fond of the game; and when she asked him if he was good at it, that nuisance of a critic obliged him merely to say: "So-so." It did not occur to him, by the way, to speak of his deeds during the war; those things were unmentionable, almost banished from memory, lost like drops in the great sea of England's sublime achievement. Englishmen are said to be modest, but that is not quite the correct term. They know their worth all right; but when they are modest it is because they are artists, masters of good form. They are intuitively aware that stories in praise of themselves, pleasant though they are to relate, do not "make the party go," as the saying is, and indeed often kill it stone dead.

The same inner critic thwarted him, also, when he would have made complimentary remarks to Miriam while Mrs. Garrett was out of the room. "Yes, her eyes are wonderful," the still, small voice said to him, "but you have used all your adjectives so often before that you cannot employ them again with self-respect or decency." He would have liked to say "I love you," but he had said it to other women, time and again, and now this critic reminded him of the fact, and so silenced him. "'One word is too often profaned for me to profane it.'" Shelley knew what he was talking about.

The evening therefore, was not very helpful, and on Sunday she had promised to go for a motor excursion with other friends, and was not available. It was devastating.

In the morning he went to church with his sister-in-law, and was mightily startled by the bloodthirsty

Psalms, the indecent First Lesson, and St. Paul's views on women in the Second Lesson, all of which were more or less unfamiliar to him; but he knew the hymns and the prayers almost by heart, and the words, having lost their meaning by long usage, held that remote sweetness which comes with memory. They produced a lump in his throat such as he felt when he thought of his dead mother and father. They confirmed his belief, shaken by the Psalms and Lessons, that this was indeed the Church of God.

Then came the sermon by the healthy-looking curate, a strong-voiced youth, physically in eruption, mentally extinct. He quoted that passage in the Bible which reads: "As Elisha was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; and he turned back and cursed them, and there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." But during his subsequent vigorous denunciation of ungodly little children who mock pious men, the God of his fathers departed from the Colonel's usually reverent heart in place of a spirit of mirth. He thought out a memorandum to send a young man, which should begin: "With reference to hat through which you were talking . . ." He began to giggle. Silly sentences and conversations drifted through his brain. As soon as he got back to the house he would refresh himself with a glass of port. "William, I want a glass of port." "Yes, sir; thick or clear?" There was a dying wasp feebly buzzing on the window-pane beside him; he hoped it had not decided to bring its brief existence in this vale of woe to an end with one last glorious sting. "If you are stung by a wasp, instantly suck out the poison; it is useless to attempt

to do this, however, if you have been stung on the nose." There was a man in the pew in front of him who had lost an arm. "I knew a man with one arm called John. What was the other arm called?"

He became rapidly sillier, and nearly choked.

Mrs. Garrett put out her toe and kicked him. "For goodness' sake, behave!" she whispered. "The young man is a 'Varsity 'blue'; what more can you want? . . . Have you got your shilling ready for the collection?"

He nodded. "There will be a collection at the door: persons leaving by the windows will do so at their own risk." He was off again.

At last, however, came the final hymn, an old favorite, and the beautiful benediction; and the church was once more a place of ancient enchantment. He left the building, thus, in more sober mood; and as he walked down the white road, the sorrows of his love attacked him and tore him like the two she bears which tare the rude children. He could not see Miriam until to-morrow. To-morrow! Good Lord!—how could he endure to wait? Her slow, husky voice whispered in his inner ear; her smouldering eyes looked into his heart; her gracious hands, with the well-manicured finger-nails, touched him like things in a dream.

His sister-in-law turned to him. "You seem very depressed," she said. "Are you cross with me for scolding you in church?"

"Not in the least," he laughed.

"Well, then, are you in love?"

"Why should you think that?"

"Miriam is a most unusual girl," she replied. "I think she will cause a sensation when she comes out. But it's no good getting interested in her, Robert:

I understand that she is soon to go back to Egypt to enliven the declining years of her heartless father. I expect she'll quite enjoy that. I should think they had money: at least, she wears very expensive dresses. She'll probably make a good match out there. Nobody objects to a little Jewish blood nowadays."

He glanced quickly at her. "She isn't a Jewess, is she?" He was disturbed.

"She *says* she isn't," Mrs. Garrett replied, "but there's something odd about her."

"Oh, well," he said, "after all the Virgin Mary was a Jewess."

"Really!—you are blasphemous, Robert!" she exclaimed. She corrected herself. "No, I suppose, Our Lady was a Jewess. I never thought of it before. Dear me!"

The day was interminable. It was warm and sultry, and there was thunder in the air. In the afternoon Colonel Romance slept heavily in the summer-house, with the *Referee* over his face. In the drawing-room, afterwards, he drank four cups of tea; and an hour later he drank a long whiskey-and-soda. He went up to his room to dress for dinner a considerable time before it was necessary to do so, and sat in his underclothes, scratching himself, staring out of the window, yawning, and smoking cigarettes.

"Damnation!" he muttered, at length, attempting to pull himself together. "This is ridiculous. After all, she's only a girl, and here I am thinking about her as though she were a goddess. I must really get over this sickly adoration of womanhood. My first love-affair ought to have taught me that women are not saints."

He recalled a conversation he had had once with an

artist chap, after dinner at the house of a friend, when a liberal supply of wine had removed the man's outward polish. "Women are far less civilized than men," this artist had said. "As soon as you take their clothes off they leap back ten thousand years, leap from the twentieth century back to palæolithic times. They leap back as far as men leap when they lose their tempers. In spite of their pretty ribbons and laces, women are animals in bed; little furry animals, peeping out from between the incomprehensible sheets; little animals as incongruous in their nightgowns as dogs dressed up at a circus. You would swear that through a slit at the back their tails stood out, and either wagged or drooped according to the tone of voice of their masters. Women! Poof!"

Revolting ass! He was a Frenchman, and he was probably thinking of those wretched little French women. "L'amour est purement animal." That was how Remy de Gourmont had summarized French conceptions of love: he had read the quotation somewhere. But Miriam: perhaps she was of French stock, too. Good Lord! . . . No, she was English: she had an Englishwoman's point of view. She was almost more than English: she was an angel.

Dinner was a dreary meal, in spite of Mrs. Garrett's brave efforts. A Mr. and Mrs. Robertson dined with them, he being something in a Government office in Whitehall, who owned a summer cottage down here. He was apparently under a vow of silence, for he hardly uttered a word. There is a certain type of man—the type with which the monasteries used to be filled—who likes to dream his life away, with folded hands, and eyes staring sightlessly before him. Many of them used to go into the Church, and live their lives as incumbents of rural

parishes; but nowadays a clergyman's life has to be very active—'Varsity 'blues' are preferred; so they go into Government offices instead. Mr. Robertson belonged to that class.

Mrs. Robertson was so fragile a little woman that, in view of the notorious carelessness of servants, it was to be presumed that her husband always had to dust her with his own hands. She was of the chattering variety of the female species, wherein probably lay the cause of her husband's silence. But her flow of words was like the buzzing of a swarm of gnats to Colonel Romance, and he found it difficult to keep awake.

The couple, however, remained only until about ten o'clock. As soon as they were gone he announced to his sister-in-law that he was going for a walk in the moonlight. He explained that he had not had any proper exercise all day, and would not be able to sleep unless he worked off his incipient headache.

"Forgive my asking you," said Mrs. Garrett, "but have you an appointment with Miriam?"

He put his hands upon her shoulders. "My dear Mary," he replied, "I am forty."

"The most dangerous age, Robert," she said. "Are you going to meet her? Tell your old sister."

"No, I'm not. Miriam by moonlight causes no stir in my veins."

"Mary by moonlight did in the case of your brother," she answered, "and it seems to me he looked remarkably like you as he stood outside the window and tried to imitate the cry of an owl. . . . As though I should have waited for the signal," she added, thoughtfully. "I was hanging half-way out of the window before he had crossed the lawn, and, dear me, how he jumped when he saw me!"

She sighed; it seemed to him that she was about to cry, and his heart was filled with tenderness towards her. "I'm forty-two," she said. "Do you know, forty-two is a ghastly age for a woman. She is neither young nor old; but the tragedy is that then, when she is most capable of love, when she most needs it, she is often no longer attractive to men. It's all right if her husband is alive; but if he's dead . . . Oh, Robert, I wish he were alive." She paused. "Good heavens, though!—no, I don't. He'd be after Miriam, too. You were both in love with that red-haired girl, before I met him; and you'd both be in love with this little monkey, and I should be suffering tortures." She uttered a short laugh.

"Nonsense" he assured her. "I'd back you to keep any man. Why, you're a most attractive woman. And let me tell you another thing; it's seven years since he was killed; and I think it's most awfully faithful and nice of you to have remained on in England, instead of packing up and going back to the States. I think he'd be awfully pleased to think you stuck to the rotten old country he died for."

"He didn't die for England," she said. "He wanted to live; he loved life. As a matter of fact, he was killed while he was giving water to a wounded German."

"Well, wasn't that for England? Weren't we fighting to teach those devils what an Englishman's idea of a gentleman was?"

She nodded, and, taking a cigarette from the box on the table, lit it thoughtfully. "Well, go for your walk," she smiled. "Take the latch-key with you. I'm off to bed. I'll tell William to put out the whiskey and the lights.

Leaving the house, he made his way down the drive

towards the open road. Here all was silent. The night was warm and windless, and heavy clouds framed the expanse of the sky wherein the full moon travelled in all her glory. A mist hung low over the fields, and here and there shadowy cattle moved through the grass. He pulled his cap from his head, and thrust it into his pocket; then, stick in hand, and pipe in mouth, he set off along the white road in the direction which would take him past the fewest houses. He wanted to be alone. He wanted to think things out: lovers always do.

After a considerable tramp he paused at the gate of a field in which the drowsy bulk of an old mare could be discerned through the mist. A pathway led, he knew, through this field to the wooded slope of a hill, and, passing this, he would come out somewhere at the back of his sister-in-law's house. He vaulted the gate with one hand upon the top rail; liked the feeling of doing so; climbed back; and vaulted it again, this time falling nearly flat in the long dewy grass, and scaring the mare into a hasty retreat across the field.

Climbing a stile at the opposite side he entered the darkness of the copse, where the fallen leaves formed a soft carpet under his feet, and dots and patches of white moonshine alone lit the way. The hush of a deep enchantment seemed to rest upon the woods. The tree-trunks stared silently at him as though they were bewitched knights and ladies urgently imploring him to release them; and when, presently, he disturbed an unseen creature which went off at a run through the crackling undergrowth, he momentarily braced himself for an encounter with a dwerger or a pidwigeon or a boggart or a succubus, or something awful of that kind.

At length he came out in to the moonlight once more, and seated himself upon another stile. He had got to think things out; and here in the space of an English night, he ought to be able to do so. The point was simply this: was he really in love this time, or was it just an infatuation? What was the test? The test must surely lie in the answer to a direct question: could he think of Miriam as the possible mother of his children? Could he picture her as the presiding spirit of a home and a family?—or was she just a fascinating creature, beautifully dressed, to be taken out to dinner; to be danced with; to be intoxicated by; to be ministered to; to be lived for; to be torn from, when his work called him; to be lost in, when his work was done? Women always seemed to him to be divided into three species: the born spinsters, the fascinating creatures, and those whom men marry.

How did it sound:—"Colonel and Mrs. Romance, Miss Romance, Miss Jane Romance, Master John Romance, Master . . ." No, three were enough to get on with. Or did he prefer: "Hullo!—there's Colonel Romance and that beautiful woman"?

He tried to concentrate his mind in order to answer these questions; but he could not do so. His thoughts were confused, and presently, very muddle-headed, he continued his walk. At length he found himself in a field, upon the top of a low hill, on. the far side of which, across an iron railing, he saw the dark walls of a house rising above a group of bushes. Beside it there was an open lawn, and beyond this, half hidden by trees, a second house. He looked at the two buildings for a moment, uncertain of their identity: then he realized that he had completed the circuit, and was standing behind the house in which Miriam lived, and was looking across the two gardens to his sister-

in-law's home. He must find a path which would lead him to his destination as shortly as possible, for his watch told him that it was already nearly midnight. Moreover, the clouds were gathering for rain, and the moon shone only at intervals.

He looked about him, but could see no pathway from the field other than that by which he had entered it. He would either, therefore, have to retrace his steps, or climb the iron fence, slip across Miriam's garden, jump the ditch again, and so reach his destination. The latter alternative intrigued him. Of course, everybody in the house would be asleep; but the dog might bark. All the better: it would be fun to play the burglar and to dash along the pathway to the ditch and hurl himself over it.

He hastened down the slope, climbed the iron railing, and slipped across the open grass to the bushes, close to the side of the house. He rounded the corner of the building in their protecting shadow; and now before him lay the open lawn, and beyond it the path by which he could reach uncompromising territory. Before making his dash, however, he took the precaution of glancing up at the front of the house which was now revealed to him through and above the leaves of a clump of lilacs. His eyes travelled over the series of windows, all as silent as the grave; and last of all he took a step forward, and peeped round the bush to inspect the window immediately opposite him, of which only the top had been visible.

Great Scott! He leapt back. It was wide open; and at it, in the full light of the moon, stood Miriam. The window-sill was less than five feet from the ground, and not much more than that distance from him. The girl's hands were clasped before her upon the sill. Her dark, shadowed eyes were raised to the

sky; and the strong yet gentle light falling upon her face, her throat, her neck, and the soft dressing-gown which hung loosely about her shoulders beneath the tumbled mass of her hair, converted her into a figure hardly of this world at all, a something dreamed of in a summer sleep, longed for and not attained.

There was in her attitude an abandonment, a wild unconsciousness, which, plainly enough, was that of grief: a straining upward of the throat, a tenseness of the arms, a passionate movement of the breast; and in this tragic abandonment the wealth of her beauty found expression. She was wonderful, superb! She was a goddess, she was a Madonna, she was Eve incarnate, the deathless Woman, the eternal bride, the everlasting mother!

He pushed closer to the bushes, and, holding aside the branches, gazed at her with an intensity of which he had not known himself capable. His disengaged hand hung loosely at his side, fingers apart: it was as though he had been caught looking at something which man's eyes may not behold. Her beauty bound him there; the tender yearning of her face drew from him the confession of a longing as unnamed as her grief. If only he could grasp the meaning of it. . . .

Then suddenly it seemed to him that he understood. That attitude, that expression: they were the appeal of Woman for Man. They were the demand for love.

As he watched, the girl's lips moved: she was whispering passionate words to the night. He strained forward to listen, for the words were all Nature's, not hers alone, nor his. There was a tone of agony in them which, in its piteous entreaty, moved him to the depths of his romantic English nature.

"Oh, God," she whispered, "have mercy on me! Save me from this misery. Give me the right of

my womanhood, give me the right of my womanhood. . . ."

Her head sank upon her outstretched arms, and the torrent of her hair hid her. The clouds closed over the moon, shutting out the light of the heavens, and the earth was dark with foreboding. To the little Colonel the sound of her weeping in the darkness was unendurable. It stirred all the man in him. He ached to take her in his arms, that he might soothe her with his kisses. It so wrung his heart that, casting prudence to the winds, he sprang forward, and stood facing her.

"Miriam!" he cried, and he knew not what he said. "Miriam!"

She raised her head, and looked at him with startled eyes. "You!" she exclaimed, with resentment in her voice. "Colonel Romance, what are you doing here?"

"It isn't necessary to ask me that," he answered, in a tone which did not attempt to hide his feelings. "I need only tell you I'm here quite by an accident. You must believe me: I haven't time to explain now. I mustn't be seen here." He laid his hand upon hers on the window-sill. "You are in trouble. I heard you praying to God to help you. I don't want you to tell me what's gone wrong. But if I can help at all . . . You know, I may be part of the answer to your prayer. He chooses all manner of agents. You never know what He'll do when He . . . when He means business. If I can be of any use, oh, I can't tell you how glad I shall be."

"Thank you," she said, but she shook her head. "Thank you awfully. It's nothing. It's no use. Please go away."

He took her hands in his and looked up at her.

Then he bent down and laid his lips upon her fingers. A moment later he was running headlong across the lawn, with the thunders of the breaking storm reverberating in his ears, and the greater thunders of his love beating upon his brain.

Down the path he ran; somehow he scrambled across the ditch; nor did he pause until he had reached the house.

"It's she!" his heart shouted within him, while the thunder rolled. "It's *my* woman at last; it's the mother of my children!"

He hurried up the stairs to his room, panting, and locked the door behind him. Then he sat down upon a chair, and automatically felt for his pipe and pouch, but paused, holding them in his hands.

"Miriam!" he muttered, as though she were in the room, "what in God's name is the matter? What's wrong, my dear? . . . Oh, damnation!"

He brushed the back of his hand across his eyes, and gulped; for he was an Englishman, and an Englishman behind a locked door is the most tender-hearted, the most romantic, the most emotional soul on the face of the earth.

On her last visit to London Miriam had taken the opportunity of ordering her winter costumes; and in this matter Mrs. Garrett had constituted herself her adviser, although there was not much need to offer advice to one who had a natural talent in the art of choosing and wearing clothes. There are some women whom one can picture sobbing and stamping in front of the mirror, scraping their hair back, tugging their hats over their eyes, and crying: "I *will* be smart, however frightful it makes me look"; but Miriam managed to effect the difficult combination of being both glitteringly smart and softly alluring, both as polished as a jewel and as graceful as a flower. The costumes she had ordered, however, had now to be tried on; and Mrs. Garrett felt it necessary, therefore to offer her once more the hospitalty of her London house.

She did so with some misgiving; for her brother-in-law, who would certainly come to call, was undoubtedly attracted to the girl, and she didn't want any nonsense of that sort. He was a confirmed bachelor, much too easy-going and used to his freedom to be a successful husband of a passionate and romantic girl who would probably hang round his neck most of the day and all the night, and would wake him at daybreak to whisper, "Beloved, it is dawn: kiss me." Miriam had not those smoulder-

ing black eyes, those strong white teeth, and that alluring bosom for nothing.

Mrs. Garrett, however, did not guess how deeply in love the little Colonel had fallen. She did not know that he had written to Miriam a brief but obviously heartfelt note, explaining how he had come to be prowling in her garden at dead of night, saying that he hoped he would see her again soon, and telling her to regard him as a friend always at her service. She knew nothing of his black misery, the aching of his heart, and the fever of his brain. Every morning he was playing singles at the tennis club, almost every afternoon he was viciously playing polo, and, in between, he was to be seen pacing the streets, up and down, to and fro, like a lunatic. But all this violent exercise only served temporarily to banish his gloom, and in desperation he was planning a secret visit to Sussex, when he received news that his sister-in-law and Miriam had come again to town.

He went immediately to call, and arrived at the house one late afternoon in a condition bordering on insanity. As he drove up to the door, he was hailed by a familiar voice, and, turning round, found himself in the presence of his old friend and one-time brother-officer, Charles Erskine, a man of his own age, a tall, sunburnt, yellow-haired, lean, loosely-dressed fellow-bachelor.

Charles Erskine had resigned his commission after the war, because he could not afford the expenses of a cavalry regiment, and had associated himself with an English company in Egypt, whose hope it was to make the Eastern Egyptian Desert yield its natural wealth to their enrichment. The desert between the Nile and the Red Sea is a land of gold and

ornamental stones. It is the country from which the ancients obtained their porphyry, their breccia, their white granite, their turquoise, and their gold, not to mention a dozen less plentiful materials. Numerous have been the modern schemes for reworking these old mines and quarries; and shortly after the Armistice this company had been formed, with, so far, very successful results.

Captain Erskine, having always had a natural aptitude for this sort of work, was now the chief prospector for the company, and spent a great part of each year in Egypt, coming back to England only when business required his presence in London, or the heat of the Egyptian summer drove him to seek refreshment in more temperate climes. Besides his office in Cairo he had built himself a small house and storeroom on the edge of the desert behind the large provincial town of Ismuay, some 400 miles above Cairo, from which point the main routes to the majority of the sites lead out. Here he collected his caravans before setting out upon his expeditions, and here he wrote his reports and tested his samples. He had repeatedly invited Colonel Romance to stay with him in this little house in the wilderness on his way to or from India; but he had not yet succeeded in persuading him to do so.

"Hullo, Robert! I didn't expect to meet you here," he now said, as they faced one another on the doorstep. "I was coming round to your club to find you to-morrow. I've just come to pay my respects to Mrs. Garrett."

Colonel Romance stared at him distractedly, desiring only to say "Go away"; and there was a moment of awkward silence. But suddenly it occurred to him that, far from being in the way, his

friend might serve to occupy the attention of his sister-in-law; and thereat his manner leapt from a morose misanthropy to an effusive amiability.

The butler opened the door, and ushered them into the drawing-room, where they were met by Miriam, who was alone in the room. Her color rose as she held out her hand to Colonel Romance, and there was a glow in her dark eyes which showed plainly enough her pleasure. The Colonel, forgetting his manners, held her hand so long and looked so eagerly into her face, that Charles Erskine, for nearly a complete minute, had to stand awkwardly in the background fiddling with his fingers. To her lover Miriam had never seemed more beautiful, not even at the window in the moonlight. Indeed, he felt that he had not before fully realized her brilliance, nor had he appreciated the grace and *chic* of her bearing. At the window that night she had been dreamlike, allegorical, universal; but now she was definite, a creature of his world, a perfect specimen of a woman of society in its best sense. How glorious was her hair, how perfectly modelled her features, how intoxicating her mouth!

As she stood thus with her hand in his, he felt that he could never have done with looking at her. Her eyes burnt into his ecstatic brain; her lips, a little apart, seemed consciously to invite him—not wantonly, but with tender desire. Confound it! He groaned inwardly; why, why was Erskine there, when he felt that she might have given way to his impetuosity?

He turned suddenly to his friend and perfunctorily introduced him.

"Is Mrs. Garrett at home?" Charles Erskine asked, after the required salutations had been ex-

changed. If the answer were to be in the negative, Colonel Romance was determined, on the instant, to get rid of his friend, even if he had to use his fists.

"Yes," said Miriam. "I'll go and tell her you are here."

"That's very kind of you," said he, opening the door. Then, as he closed it, he turned to the Colonel. "By Jove!" he exclaimed, "that's a good-looking girl!"

"Yes, isn't she?" Colonel Romance answered, with enthusiasm. "She is my sister-in-law's latest protégé. Her father lives in Egypt, and she's staying with some people who have the house next door to Mary's in Sussex."

"What did you say her name was?" asked Charles, pricking up his ears at the mention of Egypt.

"Marcos, Miriam Marcos. Funny name, isn't it? Ever heard of it in Egypt?"

"It's a pretty common name there." A curious expression crept into Captain Erskine's sunburnt face. "What does she say her father is?"

"He's a Government official of some kind."

"Umph," muttered Charles Erskine, making a slight grimace.

"What are you looking like that for?" asked Colonel Romance, in some concern.

"Oh, nothing," said his friend casually. "It's a *native* name, you know."

"*What!*" Astonishment, dismay and incredulity appeared upon the Colonel's face, as he sprang up from the chair in which he had seated himself but a moment before. Crash! It was as though the house of his dreams had been blown up by a heavy shell.

It was as though he were spinning head over heels through the air.

"It's funny how they send their daughters home to be educated," said Captain Erskine, unmoved. "I wonder if it does 'em any good."

Colonel Romance came to earth, staggering and winded, and stood in front of his friend with fists clenched. "Do you mean to say that you think Miss Marcos is an Egyptian, an Oriental, a . . . a . . . *native?*" he cried, his eyebrows lifted, his mouth open.

"Well, Miriam is a pretty common Coptic name, and Marcos is almost as common a surname amongst Coptic Egyptians as Smith is amongst English people. The Governor of the Province of Ismuay where I live is Girgis Pasha Marcos. Many of their women are practically white as far as complexion goes. You see the Egyptians are a sort of link between the white races and the brown, and include both sorts—the nearly white and the complete niggers."

"'*Niggers,*' did you say?" the little Colonel wailed. "'*Coptic.*' What is 'Coptic'?"

"The Copts are native Christians. They very seldom get administrative posts given them: I don't know how this Girgis Pasha came to be Governor of our province, I'm sure."

"Good Lord!" groaned Colonel Romance, pacing about.

"But there's no harm in her being an Egyptian," his friend remarked. "They're a jolly fine race, especially the southerners, the black ones."

"Good Lord!" the other again ejaculated, holding his hand to his forehead.

Charles Erskine stared at him in alarm. "I say,

old chap," he asked, "you haven't been getting . . . er . . . interested in her, have you?"

"Interested!" cried Colonel Romance, beating his brow. "My dear Charles I've fallen in love with her."

"Why," said Charles Erskine. "I thought you were the man whose heart was buried in a lonely grave by the sea. You told me so."

"So it was," the Colonel groaned, prancing about the room. "But the damned thing's come back to me. Good Lord!—I knew all along she was *pukka* English by her name. And yet somehow a sort of blind instinct has permitted me to go and . . ."

In a flash he understood why it was that Miriam had her opinions in regard to international marriages so cut and dried. Of course she had thought about it! Of course she had argued with herself the case for her marrying and settling in England, the land she had come to love; argued it until she knew the ethics of the subject off by heart.

"It's not anything serious, is it?" asked his friend, with great concern.

"Charles," said Colonel Romance, with solemnity, "I have let myself think of her as the mother of my children. . . ."

Charles Erskine stood stock-still. "I say," he said in dismay, "I didn't know it was as bad as that. Poor old chap!"

"Oh, don't be a fool! It isn't bad at all. All I mean is that I've got her on the brain, absolutely off my stroke in polo, can't sit still, got the hump. . . . And you can't feel like that about a girl unless you can think of her as the right mother for your children. Charles," he said, with awful gravity, "I've associated the idea of a family with her."

"But, my dear fellow," his friend burst out angrily, "I tell you she's a native. Not that that's anything to be ashamed of, of course. Still . . ."

"I know it, I know it," said Colonel Romance in despair. "There's something wrong somewhere. I tell you instinct has led me to want her and I didn't think instinct could err. I don't believe it can, either. This isn't an infatuation."

"Then what are you careering about like a silly ass for?" asked his friend, with considerable heat,

"Oh, don't you see? Are my instincts all wrong? I can't marry a native woman. My God! the regiment would never receive her. I'd have to send in my papers." He paused. "By Jove, I will, too! I'll show 'em that we can make English people out of any material. I'll . . ." His voiced trailed away, but renewed its strength at a new thought. "My dear chap, I am not simply infatuated. Infatuation surely doesn't love its consequences, as I loved the thought of us two being partners in Nature's—you know—plan of reproduction or whatever you call it, vague as it was. No, it wasn't amorousness of any sort or description. It was the beginning of that kind of falling in love which makes for fair marriage."

"You'll soon get over it," said Charles Erskine, laconically.

"There's nothing to get over, I tell you," the Colonel shouted, picking up a sofa cushion and flinging it down again. "It practically hadn't begun."

"Well what the devil are you behaving like a demented monkey for?"

Colonel Romance seized his friend by the shoulders and forced him into a chair. Standing over him, he flung his words at him, punctuating them with the tightened grasp of his arms.

"Listen to me, you fool! While I've been flirting with that girl . . ."

"Oh, you admit you've been flirting, then."

"Yes, of course, I have. While I've been talking rot to her, my eyes have been straining to see behind the what-d'you-call-it of her outward appearance, my ears have been listening for a lost word, my thoughts have been going like mad, sort of racing ahead to possible later phases of life. Why was that?"

"I'm sure *I* don't know," his friend replied, perplexed. "Anyhow, it wasn't my fault, so you needn't lose your hair."

"It was for this reason," said Colonel Romance, speaking with great earnestness. "The expression in her face as she looked out of the window that night . . ."

"What night?" asked his friend, giving him a quick glance.

"That's none of your damned business. Her attitude as she looked up at the moon—it was the gesture of womanhood, it was the cry of the whole blessed world, it was the appeal for love. This was the woman unfulfilled, this was the woman who's got to find her mate, or know the reason why."

Charles Erskine stared at him with increasing astonishment, as he became more eloquent, more lyrical. "I tell you, my thoughts went bounding over the years, and I saw her sitting there with boys and girls that played around her; I saw her, grown old and fat, with her sons standing round her, blessing her. Charles, I saw in her the mother of Englishmen. . . . And now you come along and say that she is a black woman." His voice rose to a wail. "Were those children of mine to be piebald?"

He flung himself down on the sofa. Charles Erskine rose, somewhat crumpled, from the armchair, and smoothed himself out with care.

"Thanks for troubling to explain this simple little matter, Robert," he said.

But the Colonel was muttering "A Copt! A native! A black woman!" and did not reply. The whole thing seemed like a comedy to his friend, but to himself it was a heart-breaking tragedy.

Mrs. Garrett, cigarette in hand, entered the room, followed by Miriam. Charles Erskine rose to meet her.

"This is very nice of you, Captain Erskine," said she, shaking his hand. He was a regular visitor, and she liked him.

"I am afraid it is my farewell visit," he replied. "I am off to Egypt in a few days now."

"Egypt is in the air," Mrs. Garrett laughed. "Everybody is going there or coming from there. Miss Marcos's father lives there. Miriam, dear, have you met Captain Erskine?"

Miriam turned to them. "Yes," she said. "We have just been introduced." She went over to the fireplace, and rather aimlessly poked the fire, while Colonel Romance kept his eyes upon her in undisguised distress.

"I seldom stay in England so late in October as this,' said Charles Erskine, as he and Mrs. Garrett seated themselves near the window. "I try to get away, generally, by the end of September."

"Isn't it still rather too hot in Egypt, then?" Mrs. Garrett enquired.

"Oh, Cairo is all right," he replied. "Of course, Upper Egypt is still pretty warm. But I don't go up there till later."

"Have you a house up country?" she asked .

Colonel Romance, taking his eyes at last from Miriam, joined the conversation. "Charles has got his field headquarters at Ismuay, you know," he said, "where the routes to most of the mines start."

Having delivered himself of this information, his eyes returned to Miriam. Why, what was the matter with the girl? he asked himself. All the color had left her face. The poker was slipping from her fingers, and, with an effort, she laid it down.

"What's the matter? Aren't you well?" he whispered, as Mrs. Garrett remarked that Ismuay was some distance from Cairo. Miriam pulled herself together, and tried to smile as she murmured that she was tired, at which he nodded. He felt that tragedy was in the room, and that he must fly from it. He was as eager to be gone as he had been to come.

"Yes," Charles Erskine was saying, "Ismuay is four hundred miles or so from Cairo. It is best known as the place where the tourists start for the excursion to the great temple of Isis."

"I really must go to Egypt soon," said Mrs. Garrett. "One is beginning to feel that one's education is incomplete until that's been done."

Colonel Romance looked at his watch, and got up from the chair upon which he had been sitting. He must go away and think, get out into the air, be for once a complete coward.

"I must be on the move," he declared. "It's past six, and you know I'm dining with the Hiltons at half-past seven—a vile hour for dinner."

Mrs. Garrett turned to him. "Will you give Mrs. Hilton a message from me this evening?"

"With pleasure."

"Tell her the address of the shop I told her about is . . ."

"Oh, I say!" he muttered. He edged towards the door.

"Well, I'll write a note to her," she laughed, going over to the writing-desk with him. Captain Erskine, finding himself standing alone, joined Miriam by the fire.

"I suppose you know Egypt off by heart," he said, looking at the girl keenly.

"No," she replied, gazing into the fire. "I have been in England all my life."

"What part of Egypt is your father in?"

"Upper Egypt," she said shortly.

"How interesting," he mused. "Surely I must know him. I believe I know all the English people up there."

"My father is not English," Miriam replied quietly.

"Forgive me," he said ruthlessly. "I didn't quite catch your name." He was going to get this matter settled.

"My name is Marcos," she answered.

A postman here caused a diversion by passing the window at a brisk walk and knocking sharply at the door.

"Robert, dear, just bring in those letters," said Mrs. Garrett, looking up from the note she was writing.

"What an amazing number of posts you have in the day in London," Miriam remarked, as the Colonel returned with numerous letters which he handed to his sister-in-law.

"How dull," said Mrs. Garrett, looking at them. "A bill. Another bill. Ah, here is one for you, Miriam, forwarded from Sussex. Do keep that

Egyptian stamp for me: I collect for a young friend of mine."

Miriam rose quickly, and, taking the letter, returned with it to the fireside. "Do you mind if I open it?" she said to Charles Erskine. "Curiously enough, it is from my father."

She tore it open and rapidly read the few lines of which it consisted. An exclamation passed her lips, and she sank back into her chair with a look of blank dismay upon her face. Then she glanced up anxiously to see if her concern had been observed. Mrs. Garrett and Colonel Romance were engaged at the writing-table, but Captain Erskine was watching her fixedly.

"I hope nothing is wrong, Miss Marcos," he ventured.

Miriam controlled herself bravely. "No, it's all right," she said, trying to smile. "Let me see, what were you saying?"

"Oh . . . er . . ." he faltered, feeling that he was being brutal. "I was saying that perhaps I knew your father. Where did you say he lived?"

"Ismuay," said Miriam in a low voice.

"Marcos . . . Ismuay . . ." he went on mercilessly. "The only man I know of that name in Ismuay is the Egyptian Governor of the province, Girgis Pasha Marcos."

Miriam rose to her feet. "He is my father," she said, deliberately.

Mrs. Garrett let the pen fall from her hand and turned round to stare at Miriam. The Colonel also turned as though he had been shot, and fixed his eyes upon her.

"How interesting," said Captain Erskine, in a hard voice, coldly staring at her. Miriam clutched at

the mantelpiece, and stood confronting them. Her face was white; her eyes, suddenly lit by anger at this inquisition, blazed upon them; she was breathing hard, and swayed slightly to and fro, her usual Sphinx-like calm entirely gone.

"You are an *Egyptian?*" cried Mrs. Garrett, forgetting her manners. "Miriam, you never told me that."

"You never asked me," said the girl in an icy voice.

Mrs. Garrett rose from her chair. "It was your place to tell me," she said, with heat.

"It was not a secret," Miriam replied.

"It seems uncommonly like a secret," Mrs. Garrett burst out.

Captain Erskine looked coldly at Miriam and moved away from her. Mrs. Garrett took a few steps as though she would leave the room; then paused with her back to the door.

Miriam's eyes flashed. "Oh, you needn't all edge away from me," she cried, "though I am an Egyptian, and though my father is Girgis Pasha Marcos."

"Oh, don't be silly," said Mrs. Garrett, roughly.

Miriam looked round at them desperately. Ever since she had known Mrs. Garrett she had wanted to tell her; but she had been shy of doing so at first, and then Colonel Romance had come on the scene. How could she tell him and set this barrier between them? She had put off the evil moment; and now, suddenly, it had come upon her. Why should they all treat her as though she were an outcast? She herself had told them, after all. She had not lied.

"I'm sorry if I seem rude," she said more calmly, "but really in these few minutes you have shown me

plainly that you don't want to know me any more. Well, you won't have my company forced upon you for long. This letter from my father tells me that he is coming to England at once to fetch me. In fact, it's been delayed in the post, and he's probably here by now."

"Well," said Mrs. Garrett, "if you're an Egyptian, I suppose Egypt's the place for you. You ought to have told me."

"Well, I'm going to Egypt, right enough," Miriam retorted. "You needn't think I will be able to get out of it. Oh no!—this is my summons all right. I've been waiting for it for some time, and now it's come."

Then, of a sudden, the pent-up emotion of years burst forth, incoherent, violent. The color had flushed her cheeks once more; her voice was ringing and clear; her fists were clenched.

"You all feel that I am tainted, I suppose. In your narrow, stuck-up conceit, you feel that I'm not good enough for you. Well, I am going to my own country. My God! my own country!" she said with a hard laugh. "It's rather ludicrous, isn't it? I'm really as English as you are. I've been brought up here since I was a little mite. You didn't know I wasn't one of you. You thought I was an English girl; and now you're horrified to find I'm what you call a 'native.' Where's the difference? Tell me that! Am I black?—look at me. I've got your English point of view; my thoughts are the same as your thoughts. The only difference is that I come of a pure, blue-blooded, ancient race; and you are nothing but a hotchpotch, as you called it yourself the other day. The only thing about you that can

be called English, or given a name at all, is your point of view, and *that* I tell you I've got."

She sat down suddenly upon a chair and covered her eyes with her white hands.

"My good girl, what an outburst! Calm yourself!" said Mrs. Garrett angrily, feeling that she herself had been too little calm.

Miriam removed her hands from her face, and went on passionately, the tears filling her eyes.

"Oh, go and shudder in your bedrooms; wash yourselves clean of me! I've been teaching myself all these years to think like you, to feel like you, to have your prejudices and your dislikes, because I *know*, as sure as I live, that that's the only thing that matters. And now I have to suffer for it. I'd forgotten your silly prejudices, I'd forgotten your insularity. Oh, why have I been such a fool? You haven't even got sympathy for me. Not that I want it," she added hurriedly. "Oh dear, no! I can take care of myself. I have passed muster amongst you because I happen to be a decent thing to look at. It's all a veneer, you say; I'm not one of you."

"You're letting us know it, my dear," said Mrs. Garrett.

"Yes, I'm an Egyptian," Miriam went on, ignoring her. "Thank God, that is something to be proud of. My forefathers were lords of the world once, before ever England was out its days of cannibalism. But your countrymen have very conveniently forgotten *that*. You, Mrs. Garrett, have been kind to me because you thought I was a harmless girl, a Jewess possibly, but nothing more Oriental than that. You, Captain Erskine, will be under the painful necessity of cutting me when we see each other in Ismuay. You can't afford to know me. East and West

don't hobnob together! And you, Colonel Romance . . ."

"Oh, leave me out of it," he cried, coming towards her.

"Why should I?" Miriam asked, blanching white again, and holding her hands clenched upon her breast. "You can't continue to treat me as your friend any more than the others."

"By Jove, that I can!" he exclaimed, his face flaming. "Miss Marcos, listen to me for a moment. What do you think I've been running after you for? Why am I here now? It's because I've regarded you as a possible wife."

Mrs. Garrett put her hands to her ears. "Robert!" she cried.

"Don't be an ass," said Charles Erskine, coming over to him and catching his arm.

"Oh, I'm not proposing to you," he said to Miriam, waving Charles Erskine away. "I've only felt that there is something in you which tells me that you *are* a possible wife. If it must be said, I want to go on experimenting. Miss Marcos, may I try to get to know you better?"

Mrs. Garrett walked over to the girl, who appeared to be on the verge of a collapse.

"Come, Miriam," she said, "you are upset: we all are. Come to your room and lie down."

Captain Erskine turned to the Colonel. "You'd better come with me," he muttered, savagely.

"I'm not upset," said Miriam with a sob. "I'm only facing the truth for once in my life."

"Very well, you shall face another truth," said Colonel Romance, who in a magnetic manner was now holding the attention of the others, as he stood, small but upright and important, his handsome face

flushed, his eyes aflame. There was no difficulty in finding his words now: the poet in him, the poet that is in every Englishman, had burst the bonds of restraint and had loosened his tongue. "I've been on the verge of becoming very fond of you, I mean really fond of you. And what do you think that means? It means this. I have thought of you as the mother of men, and it has seemed to me that those men might be my sons. Oh, don't be shocked! We're all far too excited to cloak our words. This is not a proposal of marriage. It is a proposal of continued friendship with a view to possible marriage. Don't you see that a woman who has caused a man to regard her as I have regarded you *must* be a possible wife, unless instinct is utterly wrong? You have in you the qualities that give you the right, if by any wild chance you want it, of creating love eternal in me, of retaining it till the sun goes out and the skies cave in. Then you would learn from me what is tenderness, for your fingers would hold for me the priceless fabric of mankind; in your eyes I should see the primeval oceans with their burden of frail life; on your lips there would be the first smile of the old Paradise. It must be the voice of Nature that has put such thoughts into my head about you. This is no infatuation. I don't want to fall upon your neck. That hasn't come yet. It may never come: who knows? But what I do know is this"—he came closer to her, and his voice was low and intense—"when I look at you, I hear the voices of children, I see the earth replenishing herself; I see new generations and new lives, growing up, springing into existence all along the years, thinking as we do, seeing the world like Englishmen, spreading the glory of the

English point of view, as you call it, all over the world."

Miriam had risen to her feet again. Her face was eager, her head was a little thrown back, her eyes looked out, as it were, to things far off. "Yes, yes . . ." she said, carried away. "I know: I've seen it too. What is it?"

"It is love, Miriam," said Colonel Romance quietly.

Mrs. Garrett wrung her hands. "Robert, you are a raving lunatic!" she cried, on the verge of hysterics.

"It hasn't developed yet," he went on, ignoring his sister-in-law. "It may never develop. But we've seen it. Tell me, may we go on looking in case it should come to us?"

"No, no," cried Miriam. "We've seen it. That is enough. Don't forget that my family would be repugnant to your family, and yours to mine."

"Instinct will lead us on the right path," he answered, "if we play fair. We're out to produce the superman; we're doing God's work; we're consciously trying to create, to mix, to select, to find the formula. We're Adam and Eve again; and Paradise is there, somewhere, if only we can discover it. Will you try? Will you let us give it a chance?"

"No," she cried.

"Your face doesn't say 'no.'"

"No . . . no," she sobbed, giving way at last to wild tears.

"Yes," he cried, seizing her hand. Miriam drew it away and sank down upon the hearth-rug, clutching at the fender and rocking herself to and fro.

"Goodness me, are you both mad?" Mrs. Garrett almost screamed. "Miriam, go to your room."

She paced about the floor, beating her brows and breast. Charles Erskine seized his friend by the arm, making angry grimaces at him. "You fool," he husked. "She's a *native*."

"Instinct can't err," the poor, distracted little Colonel answered, shaking Miriam's bent shoulder in a sort of frenzy.

"Oh, instinct be damned!" cried Charles Erskine.

THE door of the drawing-room opened and the butler entered, obviously with the purpose of announcing the arrival of a visitor; but on seeing the agitation of the company he hesitated a moment, his mouth open, and his breath indrawn. Thus the visitor crossed the threshold unheralded, and was himself speaking before a word had passed the butler's lips.

"Please forgive this intrusion," he began, turning at once to the elder woman. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mrs. Garrett?"

"Yes . . ." she replied coming forward by a circuitous route which enabled her to shield the weeping Miriam from his gaze. The butler, defeated, left the room.

Mrs. Garrett found herself looking at a tall and somewhat portly man, dressed in a very well-made suit of grey tweed, and wearing an Old Etonian tie. She supposed him to be a retired officer; late of the Life Guards, judging by his height and bulk. His iron-grey hair was very carefully brushed; his handsome face appeared to be a little tanned by the sun; his eyes were dark and luminous, and as he spoke he adjusted a monocle under one of his bristling grey eyebrows, which instantly altered his appearance to that of an ambassador as pictured by the best Victorian novelists. A very distinguished-looking man, she thought, and wondered who on earth he

could be. She wished to goodness he had not come at this moment. He smiled graciously at her, while she endeavored, rather feverishly, to concentrate her attention upon him; and as she noted his strong white teeth beneath his trimmed grey moustache, she made another flashing guess at his identity, supposing him now to be a Spanish nobleman, or an Argentine cinema actor, which is more or less the same thing. Her heart was still thumping after the terrible scene in which she had played a part, and her thoughts were confused.

"I have just been in telephonic communication with our friends in Sussex," he explained, "and was told that you had come up to London."

"Yes . . ." Mrs. Garrett faltered, wondering who "our friends" might be.

"Let me introduce myself," he said. "I am Miram's father."

The silence of astonishment fell upon the room. Mrs. Garrett turned her head towards the fireplace, and shot a quick glance at Miriam, who had risen to her feet and was staring at the newcomer as at a ghost, her face white, the tears gone from her eyes. Colonel Romance, close to her, afforded a perfect instance of arrested movement, like a figure in a cinema-play when some incident suddenly stops the running of the film.

Charles Erskine was the first to recover. "Why, it's Girgis Pasha Marcos!" he said, somewhat patronizingly, coming forward. "I didn't recognize Your Excellency."

"Ah, Captain Erskine!" the visitor replied. "This is indeed a surprise. How are you, old fellow?"

"Oh, topping, thanks." This decidedly coldly.

("Old fellow" from a native was a bit thick!)

"Miriam!" said Mrs. Garrett, weakly.

Miriam blew her nose, and stood hesitating on the hearthrug.

Girgis Pasha advanced towards her, his arms a little extended, his face wreathed in smiles. "Is this my Miriam? My dear girl . . . I suppose you don't recognize your father?"

He put his two hands upon her shoulders, and, bending down, kissed her upon the cheek. "Why, dear me, how you have grown! It's astonishing! And you are just like your sainted mother." He spoke almost without an accent, but his English was rather bookish. He turned to Mrs. Garrett. "Miriam's mother, alas! passed away many years ago; but really, one may say that she lives again in her daughter. My dear . . .!"

Again he stooped and kissed her.

"I have only just this moment got your letter," Miriam faltered, at last finding her tongue.

Mrs. Garrett interposed. "Miriam is not very well to-day," she said, speaking a shade too quickly. "The poor girl has neuralgia. It has affected her eyes."

"Oh, England!" smiled the Pasha. "What a climate for the centre of the universe! I remember when I was at Eton I used to have a constant cold in my head. . . . But I must apologize for my unceremonious arrival: I had to find my little Miriam without delay." He beamed upon the girl.

"Of course. Very natural," said Mrs. Garrett. "Let me introduce you to my brother-in-law, Colonel Romance."

His Excellency bowed, and shook the Colonel's hand warmly. "Now, let me see; surely you must

be related to General Sir Robert Romance, are you not?"

"Yes, he was my father," was the reply. "Did you know him?"

"I knew him well," the Pasha answered. "I met him when we were both staying with old Lord Strafwell down at Penton. That must have been fifteen or twenty years ago. He was an Etonian, too, but much before my time. Were you there? Yes? But you must have been long after me. I am well on in the fifties, alas!"

Colonel Romance was as dumb as Miriam; but his heart was saying: "The man's perfectly white. This is not so bad after all. A fine-looking fellow." His English partiality for foreigners aided him to form a very favorable opinion of the Pasha.

"How time flies!" said the visitor. "Do you know, I haven't set foot in England since 1913. I have been so busy in Egypt—well, Captain Erskine will tell you."

"Yes," Charles Erskine replied. "You've always got something on hand there, haven't you?"

Girgis Pasha looked at him calmly through his monocle for some moments; then, turning coldly from him to Mrs. Garrett, he said, "I must really thank you very heartily for your kindness to Miriam. She spoke of your hospitality in her last letter."

"Not at all," Mrs. Garrett replied. "And you have come to take her back to Egypt?"

"Yes," he said. "I had to come over here on business in connection with our Government. I may mention, though perhaps I ought not to do so yet, that I am to have a portfolio in our new Cabinet. This is just a flying visit; I shall be going back in a few days, and Miriam will come too, eh, Miriam?"

"I am ready," the girl replied, in that slow, deliberate way of speaking which she now resumed after her recent outburst. "It's about time I went back to my own country and learnt to love it."

"That's right," he said. "After all, patriotism is everything." He addressed himself to Mrs. Garrett. "I have had Miriam educated over here because I admire your institutions. But now that she is of marriageable age, you know . . . well . . . of course she is an Egyptian, and we are a very proud, a very exclusive people. It would never do for her to give her heart to an Englishman, would it?"

"Oh, I don't know . . ." Colonel Romance began; but Mrs. Garrett hastily interrupted him.

"No, of course not," she said.

The Pasha smiled graciously. "That would be a calamity from our point of view. I am, of course, a profound admirer of your race, and I think that in some things you are our superiors—not, perhaps, intellectually—we, of course, are a much more ancient people, with many thousands of years of culture behind us—but in mundane affairs I confess you teach us a great deal. Still, though we can always be good friends, I am a firm believer in race-purity. Look at Miriam: is she not feature for feature an incarnation of our ancient queens, whose faces you see in the old paintings and statues of five thousand years ago? I used to tell her mother so. It would be a crime to blend so pure a type with foreign blood, don't you think? I was saying the same thing the other day to a friend of mine who had married his daughter to one of our princes. Our Royal house, you know, is of Albanian stock. I hope I shall find Miriam a husband of pure Egyptian race."

"I hope so," said Mrs. Garrett, fervently.

The Pasha continued to address himself to Mrs. Garrett, smiling upon his daughter from time to time; but Colonel Romance was no longer listening to him. He was staring at Miriam's profile in complete absorption. "An incarnation of the queens of ancient Egypt!" His poetic imagination had bounded forward in response to the words, and the splendor of his many dreams of buried cities, long-lost civilizations, and fabulous treasures, had found its focus in those beautiful features at which he was gazing.

Just as she looked now, so some dim, remote queen, whose blood ran in Miriam's veins, had looked from out her casement down on to the paved and sunlit embankment of the Nile, where the treasure ships of conquered kingdoms were moored. There was immeasurable, unfathomable history latent behind those features. Her lips had been kissed by kings in Thebos of the Hundred Gates; upon her forehead the serpent-diadem of the Pharaohs had rested, as she sat upon her golden throne in Memphis; her ears had listened to the ravishing music of the harpers at some mystic ceremony in honor of the inscrutable Sphinx; her eyes had seen the loveliness of the moon in the incense-gardens of Philæ, within sound of the Cataract; her feet had trod the halls of the palace at Alexandria, beside the halcyon sea.

Now he understood her fascination, the entrancing mystery of her smile, the ancient wisdom of her words. She was a descendant of Egypt's queens; she was a new manifestation of that beauty which was dead, yet lived eternally. The place upon which she stood was enchanted ground; there was a magic circle about her which held the romantic history of the oldest civilization on earth; there was the shining

glory of ages around her, fading into the pale light of legend. . . .

"Do sit down," Mrs. Garrett was saying to the Pasha when next Colonel Romance came down to earth.

"Thank you," he replied. "I mustn't stay. I am dining at the House of Commons to-night. But, if you will allow me, I will call upon you to-morrow morning, and take Miriam to luncheon; and perhaps in the evening you and she will dine with me at the Ritz, where I am staying, and we might go on to the Opera or somewhere. Won't you come, too, Colonel Romance?"

"That's very kind of you: I should like to," he answered, still bewildered by his thoughts.

His Excellency turned to Captain Erskine. "I'm afraid the box will probably only hold four," he said. "Perhaps some other day . . .?"

"No, I'm off to Egypt at once," Charles Erskine snapped. (He wasn't going to accept hospitality from any damned native.)

"Well, then, we shall meet out there, I dare say, though I don't expect to remain long in Ismuay. My new duties in Cairo, you know . . ." He held out his hands to Miriam. "Good-night, my dear. We must have a great talk to-morrow."

"Good-night, Father," she said. "I am so glad you have come for me." She raised her face, and he, bending down, again kissed her cheek.

"I am a very proud father," he smiled. "Au revoir, Mrs. Garrett, and my grateful thanks to you. About twelve o'clock, shall we say?"

Mrs. Garrett pressed the bell and conducted her visitor to the door of the room, where, a moment later, the butler took charge of him.

There was silence until the sound of the closing of the front door was heard. Colonel Romance was then the first to speak.

"A jolly nice fellow!" he exclaimed, turning to Miriam. "I'm so glad to have met him."

"Quite presentable for a native," she said, ignoring him and addressing herself to Mrs. Garrett. There was intense bitterness in her voice.

Mrs. Garrett ran at her and seized her by the elbows. It looked as though she were going to shake her. "Miriam!" she cried. "Don't be a spiteful little beast. Can't you see I'm ashamed of myself for having been so rude? Aren't you sorry for being rude, too?"

"Yes, I am," the girl replied. "As an Oriental, I ought to have been more calm."

"Oh, be quiet!" Mrs. Garrett exclaimed, stamping her foot. "I'm really sorry, Miriam. Please try to forget the whole thing. I'm an American, you know, and I don't know much about this side of the world. I had no idea Egyptians were white people."

"Oh yes," said Captain Erskine, anxious for peace. "The upper classes in Cairo and Lower Egypt are often quite as white as many Greeks or Italians. The peasant classes are browner; and up country all walks in life are pretty brown. You'll find your new friends out there very mixed, Miss Marcos, even in Cairo. You mustn't think they are all like you and your father. You'll see; and I hope you'll accept that as some excuse for my behavior just now."

"I quite understand," she replied, without much feeling in her voice. "If you don't mind, Mrs. Garrett, I think I'll go to my room now. I have an awful headache."

The elder woman stood in front of her. "I shan't let you go until we've made peace. Do we agree to forget this unfortunate business?"

"Oh, it's nothing," Miriam answered. "I quite understand. Please let me go now, or I shall scream!"

She walked towards the door, and Colonel Romance, hastening forward, opened it for her. "Good-night," he said holding out his hand. "Don't forget what I told you."

She gave him her hand, and pressed his tightly; but it was not the pressure of a secret understanding: it was the desperate clutch of one who was near collapse and needed support. It reminded him of the agonized grip of his mother's hand on his own, when she lay sweating upon her deathbed and felt herself slipping into the darkness of the unknown; and now, as then, it rent his heart. He turned savagely upon his sister-in-law and his friend, as he closed the door.

"I'm probably going to marry that girl," he said, "so you'll have the goodness to treat her with respect."

Mrs. Garrett sat down upon the chair nearest to her and burst into tears.

Chapter IX *Father and Daughter*

Shortly after breakfast next morning Colonel Romance received a telephone call from Captain Erskine.

"Look here, I must see you," he said. "Will you lunch with me at my club?"

"What's the use of talking?" the Colonel replied, with some irritation. "You're going to tell me that I'm a damned fool, and I know that already. But it doesn't make any difference."

"No, I'm not," was the reply. "I'm going to ask you to come to Egypt with me the day after tomorrow, and stay with me in that little house of mine in the desert behind Ismuay."

Colonel Romance gasped. "Good Lord! This is a sudden change. What's the bright idea?"

"Well, Miss Marcos is coming to Ismuay next week. I thought you'd jump at it. Perhaps it's a way of saying I'm sorry for my behavior yesterday."

"I say!" the Colonel replied. "It's most awfully good of you, old chap. Give me time to think."

"Think about it during the morning. We'll lunch at half-past one. Is that a bet?"

Colonel Romance made the appointment with eagerness, and, putting back the telephone receiver, stood for a while in a dazed condition, staring sightlessly out of the window. It was jolly decent of Charles. Of course, he would accept: he would fol-

low his destiny wherever it carried him. He still had four months' leave in front of him. He could stay in Egypt a month or six weeks comfortably: plenty of time really to get to know Miriam before taking the final and breathless plunge, or to find that he had been mistaken in his feelings for her—ridiculous thought! Charles was a brick!

But, in point of fact, Charles was not the kind of brick his friend thought him. He, like the little Colonel, had passed a troubled night; and all manner of schemes for saving the man from his folly had twisted and turned and tied themselves into knots in his head. And then, in the grey dawn, the idea had come to him. He would invite Robert Romance to stay with him in Egypt; he would let him see the girl in her native surroundings; he would introduce him to the real brown Egyptians in their own homes; and if that didn't cure him, nothing would. He knew Egypt well enough to be aware that the Colonel would be given few opportunities for seeing his lady-love out there. Precious few!

The Pasha might be a man of advanced views, but he was a so-called patriot, a Nationalist, at heart a hater of England. The patriots of subordinate nations, after all, are those who have the knack of regarding the benefits conferred by the ruling race as injuries; and Girgis Pasha was full of Egypt's wrongs. Moreover, he had doubtless spent all this money on his daughter's education so that, by her instrumentality, he might kill two birds with one stone —aid in his country's Western advancement, and further his own ambitions, by marrying her to one of those wealthy and modernized Egyptians with European ideas, into whose hands the Government in

Cairo was now passing. Colonel Romance would be completely cold-shouldered out there.

He had telephoned to Mrs. Garrett, and had received her hearty approval of the plot. "He will come to his senses in Egypt," he had said, "but if he stays here for the week or ten days before the girl and her father leave England, I'm certain he'll elope with her. He's such a hot-headed, romantic fellow." Then he had telephoned to the Colonel, and the scheme was launched.

At the hour appointed Colonel Romance presented himself at the club, but by tacit agreement the subject of Miriam Marcos was not at first introduced into the conversation of the two friends, as they seated themselves at a table beside the window in the large and sombre dining-room, the decoration of which, as a frivolous member once remarked, was carried out in a formal scheme of gall and wormwood. The day was grey and sunless, and the street outside was wet from recent rain. The conditions, thus, were entirely favorable for the arrangement of a flight to Egypt: and Colonel Romance did not require much persuading. Indeed, being English, he experienced always a thrill at the thought of leaving England: he had the wandering spirit which had led his countrymen to the ends of the earth, and he was enthralled at the prospect which his friend revealed to him—the journey in the *train de luxe* from Calais through France and across the Alps to Venice; then by an Italian steamer down the Adriatic; amongst the Greek islands, Cephalonia on the one hand, Ithaca on the other; past Crete to sun-baked Alexandria; thence by train to Cairo and by comfortable *wagon-lit* to Ismuay, which would be reached on the seventh

morning: and finally the ride on donkey-back up into the shining desert.

"I think you'll be interested in the Egyptians," said Charles Erskine, towards the end of their meal. "They're a very strange race: in fact, they present one of the funniest racial problems in the whole world. I don't think any of the scientific fellows have yet decided whether the Egyptians were originally an African or an Asiatic people. In Upper Egypt—at Ismuay, for instance, and as you get further up towards Lower Nubia, there's a strong tinge of black African blood: it's always filtering in, and here and there you find a peasant who is a negro, pure and simple. But down in Cairo and Alexandria the people are mostly a light *café-au-lait*, with famiiles here and there who are practically white. Many of them, of course, have Turkish blood, and are therefore fair-haired and grey-eyed; and some of them even have yellow German-looking hair and blue eyes and freckles, like so many of the Turks. But, not counting these, there are lots of pure Egyptians who are quite European to look at. It's very odd. They are the only race in the world, I suppose, which is a perfect link between the brown and white."

Colonel Romance listened with melancholy attention. "Yes, but when negroes and white people intermarry," he argued, "you can always tell their offspring by some sign or other—crimpy hair, or a yellowish look about the whites of their eyes, or something. But Girgis Pasha and his daughter don't show any signs like that."

"That's the curious thing," his friend replied. "The white Egyptians are genuinely white, and yet, so far as one can tell, they mix up with their brown fellow-countrymen without the least restraint. I

have a native secretary who might be an Italian to look at, and yet his first cousin, also in my employ, is as brown as my shoe. Some of the Pasha's relatives, so far as I remember, are quite brown."

And then it came out—the sudden jet of poison, uttered as calmly and casually as a remark about the weather or about the food they were eating. "If you marry Miss Marcos," Captain Erskine smiled, "your children will have lots of brown cousins. However, that's your funeral, not mine. I'm not going to try to influence you one way or the other; and, in fact, I'm going to suggest that we don't talk about it at all, but just let the damned thing work out by itself."

The Colonel received the impact of this veiled assault with fortitude, but he was undoubtedly shaken by it. Brown cousins! In his imagination they took exaggerated form, and presently they were leaping and whooping down the corridors of his brain, like a pack of savages, beating tom-toms and gnashing their teeth. But what nonsense!—Miriam was white, absolutely white.

"Look here," he said, recklessly pushing plates, dishes and silver away from him, and folding his arms upon the table, "I know you think I'm crazy, but there it is: I'm in love. I'm not going to do anything rash. I'm coming out to Egypt to see how the land lies. I'm going to have a look at Miss Marcos in her own home; and, if there's nothing much wrong, I'm going to marry her, if she'll have me. But if what you suggest is true, and there's a lot of brown blood in her family, I promise you I'll think it over very seriously, very seriously indeed."

"That's all right, old chap," his friend replied, a word or two at a time, as he lit his cigar. "We'll

leave it at that. We English, after all, have got a pretty strong color-sense, which is more than can be said of some nations. Look at the Portuguese, for instance; or the French." He blew the smoke thoughtfully into the air, from pursed lips, his head back, his eyes looking at the ceiling. "Do you know that there are sixty-two nigger regiments of the strength of the French Army, and any number of the kind of regiment—*battaillon mixte*—in which blacks and whites serve side by side? Every year adds hundreds more half-caste children to the French population: you can see them by the dozen on the quays at Marseilles. They're going just the way Portugal did. We've got to stand out against that sort of thing, haven't we?" He looked down now at his cigar, as though examining it: he had the off-hand manner of concealed concentration. "Of course, I don't mean that it's necessary for us to make the ludicrous fuss they make in America about keeping niggers in their place. In the United States, you see, one man in every ten is a negro, and in the South the niggers enormously outnumber the whites; so the whites have to make all these rules which seem so babyish to us, but which, I suppose, the situation justifies. But still, even over here where we have no black problem to make it necessary for us to behave like rude little boys to every nigger we meet, we've got to be exclusive, haven't we?"

"Yes, of course," Colonel Romance replied. "But now you're talking of nigger blood, which is quite another story. The Marcos family may have some brown Egyptian blood; but that's not nigger."

"No, but plenty of Egyptians *have* got nigger blood," Captain Erskine answered, "and where are you to draw the line? However, you'll see what I

mean when you come out there. Let's talk of something else: I don't like the subject."

"Nor should I, if there was any question of there being nigger blood in Miss Marcos," said the Colonel, with heat. "But you know as well as I do that there isn't. She's absolutely white: she hasn't the least trace of the tar-brush. Good God!—you don't suppose I should have fallen in love with her if there had been the remotest sign of anything like that, do you? The mere thought give me the creeps."

"I'm glad to hear it." And with that remark the conversation turned to less distressing subjects.

Colonel Romance left the club, however, with a consciousness that he was under surveillance. There were doubts in his mind, carefully introduced by his friend, which battled with his convictions, and more than once his lines of defence seemed to be overwhelmed by the onrush of his fears and inquietudes. Deep dejection alternated with a sense of calm complacency within him; and despondency showed its grey face from time to time amidst his heart's elation, like a thief at a festal window.

He did not know how to meet his sister-in-law that evening: he felt ridiculously shy. Yet when the time came, and he presented himself before her, to conduct her and Miriam to the Ritz, her affectionate forbearance at once set him at his ease.

"Miriam will be ready in a minute," Mrs. Garrett told him. "I've just called out to her, and she says she's coming down now. She has been shopping like mad all the afternoon, buying a regular wardrobe for Egypt. She says her father told her to buy whatever she liked. He seems enormously rich."

Miriam presently entered the room—burst upon their gaze—dressed in a ravishing and daring little

evening frock of gold, which boldly revealed to her startled lover the beauty of her figure. Yes, the veiled woman of the East was certainly disappearing, he thought to himself as he gazed in mixed awe and dismay at her semi-nakedness; and he wondered nervously what her father would think of this dress which, with perfect propriety, was so alluringly improper. He likened it in his mind to a snap of the fingers, so summary it was, so concise, so much in little, so cheeky. It was no more daring than those worn by many society girls at the present day, yet somehow the sight of her thus arrayed was startling and arresting—the dark mass of her hair, which gave some indefinable suggestion of a thunder-cloud; the eyes like velvet; the splendour of her dazzling white teeth as she smiled rather haughtily at him; the ivory of her skin; the full curves of her breast; the slenderness of her gold-swathed waist, and the smallness of her lips, so typically ancient Egyptian, as he now realized; the gazelle-like ankles: the sinuous bare arms. She looked, he said to himself, with an inward and momentary chuckle, as undressed as a policeman without his helmet.

Mrs. Garret stared in trepidation, as the girl extended a queenly hand to Colonel Romance, for her brilliant flagrancy was enough to dazzle any man, more particularly because it was deftly aristocratic at the same time; but Miriam's attitude was one of such complete self-possession that nothing could be said. It was to be supposed that in thus buying the very latest and most devastating Paris model, and in immediately wearing it, she had definitely intended to flaunt her beauty before them; and yet, if the dress were audacious, her manner was not in the least de-

fiant. She was gracious but distant, exquisite but cool, at her ease but not ease-inspiring.

The little Colonel, quite unaware that he, too, made a striking, if less original, figure in his well-cut evening clothes, fiddled nervously with his tie and moved his head about as though to ascertain whether his stiff and shining collar permitted him to do so. He felt a hundred years old, and utterly ineligible. "I say," he stammered, "you do look ripping, if I may be allowed to tell you so."

"Yes it's a nice, simple little frock," she replied. ("Simple!" Mrs. Garrett gasped.) "I only bought it this afternoon: it happened just to fit me. I've been buying a lot of things for Egypt, though my father tells me that the shops in Cairo are better than yours."

"Yours!" The word was deliberate. It was like saying "Don't forget that I am an Egyptian!" It opened a gulf between them; but, looking at her in her golden dress, he felt that he, rather than she, stood on the wrong side of the gulf.

William entered the room, shot one pained glance at the "foreign" person, and announced, with tragedy in his voice, that the car sent by the Pasha for them was at the door. Thereat the two women were helped into their cloaks, and soon they were gliding though the lighted streets, all three of them staring out of the windows, and racking their brains to find something suitable to talk about.

In the lobby of the hotel, waiting to receive them, stood the Pasha: an elegant figure, only needing a blue ribbon across his shirt-front, and a star or two, to convert him into a Continental Archduke at a Legation ball, or something superior of that sort. The hotel staff, to a man, was eager to pay him

court, and when the gracious Mrs. Garrett, her dapper and military-looking brother-in-law, and the golden Miriam, joined him, there was a palpable flutter wherever in that noble hall there beat the true heart of a servitor.

"This seems a very nice hotel," said Miriam, whose visits to London had not been sufficiently frequent to dull her interest in its life.

"Well," the Pasha answered, with a slight shrug, "it is clean."

A hall-porter and a footman, overhearing this comment, were dumbfounded, and exchanged a glance of admiration too deep for words. The remark seemed to imply that His Excellency found the place just tolerable on that account; but actually, had they known, it indicated no more than that hotels, in his native experience, were often the haunt of the spider and the home of the flea.

The dinner which followed had been ordered with care, and the wine was of the best. Girgis Pasha proved himself to be an excellent host, and his obvious admiration for his daughter warmed Colonel Romance's heart. He did not seem to object in the least to her dress, or to the wide exposure of her neck and shoulders: his satisfaction at her beauty was pleasant to see. Miriam, in fact, was the ornament of the restaurant, and many pairs of eyes were turned upon her; while the head waiter was so enthralled that he entirely failed to fulfil his general duties.

The only unpleasant feature of the dinner, in the opinion of Colonel Romance, was that Miriam gave him no opportunity to exchange so much as a glance of friendship with her, and treated him, indeed, with disdain.

"I'm afraid I have to disappoint you about the

Opera," said the Pasha. "I could not get a box or seats of any kind there. However, we have a very fine Opera House in Cairo," he added, smiling at Miriam, "and the best Italian companies perform there; so I hope that I shall be able to make good your loss to-night. I have secured a box for the André Charlot revue instead, for I am told that the intimate revue is the bright particular jewel of the English stage."

"Good!" said the Colonel. "I like that kind of show. Those witty little ten-minute sketches are the cleverest things of their kind in the world."

"It is so curious," Mrs. Garrett remarked, "how we Americans are taught to regard English people as slow to see a joke, and English people, on the other hand, so often find Americans long-winded in their funny stories, and not snappy enough to tickle them. I was told that when a certain manager recently took his English revue company over to New York, his actors and actresses were terrified at the rehearsals in case American audiences would not be quick or subtle enough to see their jokes. As a matter of fact, they've taken New York by storm, which shows that the wit of the two countries is much the same, after all."

"Are the Egyptians a witty race?" Colonel Romance asked his host.

"Yes, I think so," he replied. "We have some very amusing writers and actors; and, in fact, the comic scenes in Shakespeare make one laugh more in Arabic, as played by Egyptian comedians, than they do in the original."

"Good gracious!" Mrs. Garrett exclaimed. "Do you have Shakespeare in Egypt?"

"Oh yes," he replied. "Shakespeare's appeal is universal."

"That's because he was so English," Miriam remarked, and her slow voice at once commanded attention. The oracle was speaking. "The reason why England has become a world-power is that the English people concentrate on universal qualities, I mean on ideals that all men have in common—integrity, fair-play, sports, fun, kindliness, common sense, and those sort of things. They don't limit themselves to patriotism and nationalism."

The Pasha adjusted his eyeglass and looked at her searchingly. "Love of one's country ought to come first," he said, in reproof.

"I don't think so," Miriam replied, with surprising confidence. To Colonel Romance she was at that moment a crowned queen of ancient Egypt, speaking in the shadow of the Sphinx. "The greatest thing is love of the message one's own country has more or less unconsciously got for the world; and nations are successful or otherwise according to the acceptability and decency of that message. England has something to say to the world which the world understands, and that's why the English ideal has spread all over the earth."

"Well, the Germans loved what they had to say, too," said Colonel Romance, fighting against eclipse.

"Yes, but it wasn't acceptable or decent, and so it was rejected," she replied, making a gesture of finality with her hand. "We Egyptians also have a message."

"We have, indeed," the Pasha agreed.

"How would you define it?" the Colonel asked.

"I think I should call it good-nature," Miriam replied. "I've read all the books on ancient Egypt

I could lay my hands on; and I think the most apparent national characteristic is good-nature. In older days we were the only people who were not cruel or ferocious. We're a kindly race, don't you think, Father?"

He smiled upon her. "Yes, I think there is that to be said for us. We've been civilized for such thousands of years, you see. . . . But we mustn't talk of ourselves." He turned to Colonel Romance, in order to change the conversation. "Tell me, Colonel, when do you go back to India?"

"In about four months," he replied.

"And are you really going to settle down to one of your trying English winters?"

"Oh no, indeed," the Colonel answered, bracing himself. "I've just accepted an invitation to go out and stay with Captain Erskine at Ismuay."

He did not dare to look at Miriam as he made the announcement, much as he desired to note its effect upon her. He did not dare to look at Mrs. Garrett, for he did not know that she had already been prepared for this change in his plans by Captain Erskine. He kept his eyes, therefore, upon the Pasha, and was troubled to see that his news was not favorably received.

"My dear Colonel," His Excellency replied, "I think that is a waste of your precious leave, if I may say so. Captain Erskine's house is just a hot and uncomfortable shanty standing on a most infernal desert plain. There's nothing to do: no shooting, no tennis, no amusements, no society—nothing! You will be extremely bored."

"Well, it will be sunny, at any rate," Colonel Romance laughed. He glanced at Miriam, and her eyes met his in an enigmatical stare which was abso-

lutely meaningless to him. Baffled, he turned to his sister-in-law, and was surprised to find upon her face an expression of benevolent interest.

"I was thinking of going out to Egypt myself this winter," she said, smiling at him.

"You don't mean to say so!" he exclaimed. "What for?"

"I am deeply interested in Egypt and the Egyptians," she answered, still smiling.

When dinner was finished the Pasha drove them to the theatre, where a box had been reserved for them. Colonel Romance was becoming exasperated at his inability to speak to Miriam alone, or to break through her apparently hostile reserve; and when he found himself manœuvred, with her consent, into a position in the box in which he could say no word to her, nor exchange so much as a glance, a cloud of gloom settled upon him which the hard-working actors and actresses wholly failed to disperse. The situation was like a nightmare. The girl was not helping him in the least: she was deliberately freezing him, in fact, and gradually his anger swelled within him.

At last, however, at the close of an interminable performance, a brief opportunity for a word with her was presented to him. The Pasha went out into the street to find his car, and, at the same time, Mrs. Garrett was engaged in conversation by a man and his wife whom she knew, Colonel Romance thus being left alone with Miriam in a corner near the door of the theatre.

He gave one despairing look at her, saw no suggestion of responsiveness in her face, and, suddenly, lost his temper. "Look here," he blurted out, "I don't see why you should treat me like mud, though you

are an Egyptian. You haven't given me a chance to say a word to you the whole evening. You've been putting on the most absurd airs, and behaving like a spoilt child. I suppose your father's pathetically obvious admiration for you has turned your head or something: but let me tell you I think your manners are atrocious, and your dress is a scandal." The outburst relieved him enormously: it was like being sick.

She stared at him in frank amazement, and clutched her cloak about her as he pointed with a contemptuous jerk of his thumb at her little golden frock. The color crept into her face, and her eyebrows came down low over her angry eyes.

"How dare you speak to me like that?" she whispered. "You are forgetting yourself."

"No, I'm not: I'm remembering myself. I'm remembering that I stood by you last night when you were being insulted, and practically offered you the greatest thing I'd got to give—my devotion, and . . ."

"I told you I didn't want it, I only want to be left alone. Why are you coming out to Egypt?"

"Because I told you I wanted to get to know you better. I didn't realize that you were going to freeze into a block of ice, and go strutting about in a wisp of gold tinsel, as though you thought you were Cleopatra."

She made a movement forward, as though she were about to run across the hall to Mrs. Garrett; but he stretched his arm out across her, barring her way.

"No, listen to what I'm saying," he whispered. "You may be a reincarnated Egyptian queen to your father, but to me you're just a perverse girl who ought to be smacked. You can't play with a man as you're playing with me."

"I'm not playing with you," she retorted, breath-

ing hard. "I'm fighting you. I don't want you to come to Egypt."

"Well, then, I shan't come," he answered. "I thought you'd like to feel you had a friend near you out there; but you're fascinated at finding your father is a polished sort of man of the world, and you think it's all going to be wonderful out in Egypt, and so you think you can turn my friendship down. Well, you'll be sorry for it. I know enough about conditions in the East to know that you'll want all the friends you've got soon. Make no mistake about that."

"Oh, you've got the whole thing wrong," she said, and his heart leapt to hear a sort of despair in her voice. "I'm not going to be patronized by anybody. I know what I'm in for all right, but sympathy is the last thing I want."

"It's the last thing you'll get, if you behave like you have done to-night," he told her. "I've never had such a miserable evening in all . . ."

Mrs. Garrett came across to them, and a moment later the Pasha appeared at the door, beckoning to them.

The drive back to Mrs. Garret'ts house was accomplished without incident, and at the door Girgis Pasha bade good-night to his daughter and to her hostess, promising to come on the next day to arrange for the former's return to Sussex, in order that she might pack up her belongings prior to joining him at the Ritz for the remainder of his brief stay in England.

"Can I drop you at your place?" he asked the Colonel.

Colonel Romance muttered his thanks, and, then, while Mrs. Garrett was saying a final word to the

Pasha, went boldly to Miriam, who was standing in the doorway, and held out his hand.

"I'm sorry for behaving like a fool," he said, speaking in a low, intense voice. "Say good-bye to me decently, for God's sake."

She pressed his hand eagerly. "Forgive me," she whispered. "Come to Egypt, please come to Egypt."

"Of course I'll come, my dear," he replied. "I'll be there when you arrive."

She smiled at him, but her eyes were full of tears as she turned away and entered the house. He wished to Heaven he could have taken her in his arms.

PART II

Chapter X *The Marcos Family*

Girgis Pasha Marcos had held the post of Governor of the province of which Ismuay was the capital for the last two years; but, since he had always regarded the appointment as a stepping-stone to higher office, he had not given up the large house in Cairo which was his real home. At Ismuay he had rented, furnished, from a rich young Copt named Boutros Bey Andraos, the only available house of any size in the town, and he had taken no trouble to introduce into it any of that elegance of which his Western education and his natural good taste had made him master. The house had been the home of the present owner's father, but the young man himself lived in Cairo, and he, too, had taken no interest in its furnishing.

Girgis Pasha was a widower; but in a charming flat in Cairo he maintained, at great expense, a certain Austrian lady whose beauty and whose clothes were one of the sights of the metropolis. During his tenure of office at Ismuay he had, of course, only been able to be with her during his monthly visits to Cairo; but she had conducted herself with circumspection in his absence, and now that he was so soon to exchange his distant governorship for a Cabinet appointment, he looked forward to a resumption of his almost daily visits to her flat. It need hardly be pointed out, perhaps, that it was the sensitiveness of this lady which explained Miriam's

over-long residence abroad; and it was, likewise, her education of the Pasha which had caused him to pay the bills for his daughter's clothes without complaint, and to appreciate them when at length he actually saw them.

Most men lead double lives, but there is generally a great resemblance between the one and the other, owing to the fundamental similarity of women and the habitually careless treatment of them by men. But in the case of Girgis Pasha the difference between his two lives was extreme. In Cairo he was a modern man of the world, a man of taste, the possessor of a more or less Western house and a fashionable mistress. In Ismuay he was merely a somewhat Europeanized native, living in a tawdry house which always seemed to be full of female relations of older dispensation. Yet it was to the latter house that he had taken Miriam on his return to Egypt, for he was still nominally Governor of Ismuay for yet another few weeks, though most of those days were to be spent in Cairo. The female relations, he had felt, would look after her, until, on taking up his residence once more in the metropolis, he would be able to do so himself or place her in better hands.

The house at Ismuay was, on the outside, a pretentious building, designed in a florid Græco-Italian style. It was painted white, and against this the vivid green of the woodwork of the shutters and balconies was sharply contrasted. It fronted a narrow street, and was faced by a row of smaller houses whose mysterious windows were barred by lattice work. There was a garden at one side of the house, screened from the street by a high whitewashed wall; but the far end of this wall had collapsed, and had been replaced by a rickety fence, over which a view of

the ill-tended garden could be obtained. It was just an area of low palms, rose-bushes, and shrubbery, intersected by gravel paths; and beside the house a luxuriant sycamore tree of dense foliage spread its laden branches up to the balconies and windows of the upper floor.

The mansion was entered by a flight of black and white tiled steps, and a recessed portico, the roof of which was supported by two brick-and-plaster pillars, painted to represent the native craftsman's delusions upon the subject of marble. Six cane chairs stood stiffly upon the floor of this portico, for the benefit of those persons who awaited an audience of the Governor, or those employed by him who desired to take the air. The walls and ceiling were here decorated with richly-colored paintings representing the Nile, the Pyramids, and the Sphinx as viewed between those luxuriant clusters of mandolines, ribbons, and cherubs which seem once to have formed the foreground of so many picturesque Southern scenes: they had been executed, one might suppose, by some aged Italian artisan who had decided, in a moment of ecstasy, to dispense with his spectacles and to paint with his feet.

The front door opened into a lofty domed hall, lit by small colored glass windows in the cupola. Two of the panes were broken, and through these apertures the sparrows flew in and out merrily. On the right of this hall was a carpeted reception room, having in the middle a long table covered with a cloth, into the design of which a startling portrait of the King of Egypt was worked. Most elaborate red satin curtains, topped by gilt mantles, adorned the windows; and gilt and red satin chairs and sofas were set stiffly against the walls in close array around

the room. On the opposite side of the hall was the office. The Pasha's official quarters were, of course, at the *Mudirieh*, or Government Buildings, in a more central part of the town; but an office in his private residence, though it were never used, looked well, and there was, indeed, an impressive formality about the large office table (above which hung a portrait of His Egyptian Majesty), and the row of chairs protected by white linen covers.

From the hall a narrow stairway mounted to the upper story, which was spread, somewhat shakily, over the lower rooms and which extended back over the kitchens and storerooms at the rear of the house. On this upper floor there were several bedrooms, including a small convent-like chamber, looking out upon a lane at the back of the house, which had been assigned to Miriam. The walls here were white-washed, and the furniture was chiefly of iron painted to represent yellow wood.

The main room upon this story was termed the *salon*, and was lit by three large windows, two of them looking eastward over the garden, and the third commanding the street at the front, or south side, of the house. Cheap white lace curtains were looped back from these windows by means of red silk sashes; and on the floor there was a flowered carpet of English manufacture. The walls were washed a terra-cotta color, and the woodwork of the heavy shutters and of the door was painted green. The gilt chairs and sofas were covered with blue plush; upon an iron table there was a large gramophone with an enormous funnel, shaped like a flower; and against the wall there was an upright piano. Along the blank wall at the back of the room stood a stiff row of ten cane chairs; and above them hung a mir-

ror, and two cheap gilt-framed oil paintings, each representing a Scotch moor complete with stag and sunrise.

A peculiar feature of this room was a green-painted trap-door in the ceiling; and in one corner a ladder rested against the wall, ready to be adjusted to the trap when open, so as to give access to the flat roof, upon which the household washing was hung out to dry. From this roof a good view of the town was to be obtained. On the surrounding housetops or on the crazy balconies, native women could be seen at all times of the day, gesticulating to one another and aimlessly pottering to and fro. Goats, dogs, and cats trotted all over this jumble of roofs, or paraded along the tops of the high mud-brick walls; and below, in the court-yards, cows, buffaloes, camels, donkeys, horses, sheep and more goats, dogs, and cats, exercised those vocal powers with which a very deaf Providence had endowed them, while between their restless legs the undersized chickens crowed bravely. Flights of pigeons circled overhead, flashing white against the deep blue of the sky, and higher still the kites sailed past, uttering that shrill wail which is, as it were, the individual cry of Egypt.

Westward, beyond the houses and minarets, a glimpse of the Nile and of the great sails of the river-going vessels could be obtained. Beyond the river the fields stretched out to the desert, which in turn rolled back to the rugged cliffs where the sun set each evening; and here, on the edge of the desert, surrounded by the mounds of an ancient city, could just be seen the famous temple of Isis, which made Ismuay a halting-place for the itinerant tourist. Eastward, behind the housetops and the white domes of a Coptic church, there was a strip of cultivated

land, backed by the open desert which here rose gently to the distant hills in a flat-surfaced and sun-scorched plain. Standing stark upon this plain, about half a mile back from the fields, stood the little house in which Captain Erskine lived; but that was far away.

Such, then, was the Governor's mansion to which Miriam had been brought. Her arrival in Egypt had been something of a shock to her. As the steamer moored at the quay, her father had donned for the first time his red tarboush, or fez; and though this headdress was decidedly becoming to him, it gave him an Oriental appearance which had been at first a little disconcerting to her. Then a group of minor Egyptian officials had come on board to welcome him; and some of these men were brown-skinned, and were very decidedly sons of Africa. They were polite and well-mannered enough, but they were "natives" in the English sense, and the shock to Miriam lay in her sudden realization that they were her fellow-countrymen.

In the train to Cairo she had experienced her first taste of the seclusion in which Egyptian women, even those of Coptic family, were kept; for a seat had been obtained for her in a compartment reserved for ladies, and the door into the corridor was closed upon her, while her father sat in another compartment in the company of two or three male friends. At Cairo they only had time to change from one train to the other, and presently they were rushing southwards through the darkness towards Upper Egypt. In this train, however, she found herself in a comfortable sleeping-compartment; and after dinner in the almost empty restaurant car her father had sat with her for a while, telling her of his future plans.

"Of course," he had said, "you will find the time at Ismuay hang heavily on your hands; for there, in a provincial town, you will have to conform to some etxent to old-fashioned Egyptian customs. We must not shock your women-relations too much, must we? You will find that they belong to an older school. However, in a few weeks we shall move to Cairo; and then I hope I shall be able to show you that we in Egypt at the present day lead much the same life that you have been accustomed to in Europe. You shall be mistress of my house, and shall have all the freedom you can reasonably want. I shall introduce you to some nice young Egyptian men; you can have plenty of tennis, riding, driving, and so on; and sometimes we shall have parties at my house, or lunch or dine at the big hotels."

"That all sounds delightful," she had replied, though her heart was heavy.

"But soon, of course," he added, smiling benevolently at her, "you will get married. I have a man in mind for you—rich, handsome, and young; but no! I shall leave the choice to you. I am not old-fashioned in my views in regard to those matters. I believe in a girl being consulted as to her future husband, and getting to know him before she is married to him."

They had reached Ismuay before seven o'clock in the morning, and it was evident from the absence of persons upon the platform that Governor had not informed any but his household of the hour of his return. The policeman and yawning railway officials sprang to attention and saluted him as he passed across the platform; and somebody went running for a carriage. Then they had swayed and rattled through the narrow streets, while the negro driver

shouted to the sleepy townspeople to get out of the way. Wild-looking men mounted on camels edged their beasts to the side of the road; veiled women, carrying water-jars upon their heads, turned their faces to the wall; disreputable black servants, opening shutters and sweeping thresholds, their features half-hidden in their loosely-coiled turbans, paused to stare at them as they passed; small boys leading water-buffaloes down to the river clutched at the halters, or poked and beat their charges with their sticks, to make room for the carriage; dogs barked; the dust went up in clouds, and the early morning chickens scuttled across the road; and everywhere flies buzzed about their faces.

When the carriage drew up at the front door of the Governor's residence, and Miriam saw for the first time the tawdry house which was to be her home for some weeks, her depression was deep; but when she was met by her Egyptian relations and realized that these were the people with whom she was to live, her state of mind was one of real horror.

Firstly a male cousin was introduced to her, Elias Effendi Girgis, a sleek, olive-complexioned youth who smelt strongly of cheap scent. He wore European clothes, and his tarboush was tilted at a somewhat rakish angle. Without that headdress he would have passed for an Italian shop-walker: he was a poor relation, and his education had been neglected. He spoke English badly, and seemed to be more at home in the French tongue, which, however, he also mutilated. Fortunately he had to return to his work at Assiout a day or two later, and she did not see him again.

Next she was embraced by Mrs. Marcos, the widowed sister-in-law of the Pasha, who was paying

him an extended visit which had developed almost into permanent residence. She was a plump, elderly woman with a round, fat face, one of her eyes (as is so common in Egypt) being whitened by cataract. Her face was so thickly powdered that it presented an appearance of deadly pallor, and her eyebrows were heavily painted in startling contrast. Many women of this class in Egypt employ powder and paint in much the same manner as soap and water is employed by Europeans. When Mrs. Marcos felt dirty she added more powder to her face, and saturated herself once more with a piercing variety of scent, which, combined with the consequences of a diet of garlic, caused her to be at all times an overwhelming surprise to the senses of the unfortunate Miriam.

Her costume in the early morning, when Miriam first saw her, was simple. She wore a long gown made of yellow-patterned print, hanging straight from the neck to the feet and having something of a train at the back. A little lace showed itself at the neck and wrists. Her thin grey hair was knotted at the back of her head, being held in position by numerous insecure and protruding pins. Several strings of beads were hung around her neck, and on her fingers she wore a number of rings. Upon her feet were pink silk shoes with high heels, and above them Miriam caught a glimpse of white stockings striped with brown. This costume was changed later for her usual day dress, which consisted in the main of a cotton blouse and a black silk skirt. Around her waist hung a black satin garment, which might as readily have been taken for an overskirt tucked up as for a cape fallen down; and when she went into the open air, which was seldom, she pulled this

over her head and shoulders, holding it together at the breast with her left hand. She wore no corsets, and consequently bulged in a remarkably shapeless manner.

Miriam was then introduced to Mrs. Todros, Girgis Pasha's younger sister. She was a small, gaunt woman with somewhat hollow cheeks and deep-set eyes. In spite of powder and paint she looked horribly dirty at all times. A strand of her sleek hair was always falling down at the back; and her costume, which in character was almost a precise counterpart of that worn by Mrs. Marcos, looked dusty and draggled. The diamond rings upon her fingers showed that she was a woman of wealth. Her husband was a rich Coptic landowner, and (as, unfortunately, is often the case with Christian Egyptians) a moneylender to boot. Important business had called him to Alexandria, and hence his wife had come to stay for a few weeks with her brother. She was a sharp-tongued little personage, as her small brown eyes might have indicated; but, at the same time, she had none of the complacent self-satisfaction which marked the bearing of Mrs. Marcos. She knew that she was not her brother's equal; and inwardly she was distressed that her father had given no attention to the education of his mere daughters.

Lastly, Miriam made the acquaintance of Rosa Boulos, the fifteen-year-old daughter of the late Hanna Bey Boulos, a contractor in Cairo, who had married a sister of the Governor, now also dead. The orphan girl lived with her aunt, Mrs. Todros, and had been brought by her to Ismuay; and it was explained to Miriam by Mrs. Marcos that Rosa would be a pleasant companion for her, and would entertain her when she was dull by playing the piano,

or reading the Bible to her in English. She was a squat, fat girl, afflicted with a painful squint, and with the most immoderately thick ankles, but otherwise not ill-favored. When Miriam first saw her, and, indeed, on many subsequent occasions, she was dressed in a short red cotton frock, tied in at the waist by a silk sash; white stockings, black buttoned boots, having several of the buttons missing; and a small, sprightly straw hat of no particular shape was perched upon the back of her head, being fastened by an elastic band which passed under her chin. Her hair hung in a single short plait down her back, terminated by a small bow of red ribbon. Her eyebrows were arched so high over her eyes that she appeared to be viewing life at all times as a spectacle which caused her considerable astonishment.

The three women spoke English badly but fluently, and Miriam was soon answering an endless number of questions, and was being examined from head to foot by inquisitive hands and eyes, suggestive of the monkey-house. When she went to her bedroom to unpack her boxes the women followed her into it, and scrutinized her clothes with childish excitement, expressing their approval or disapproval without restraint.

For a time these strange creatures interested her, but after a while the inherent vulgarity of their conversation, their ugly, broken English, the ignorance and the vanity of their minds, and their erotic or obscene stories began to appall her. Their views were strictly conventional, their conventions hatefully unenlightened. A profound despair settled upon Miriam's thoughts; and as the days went by the gloom deepened. She was buoyed up by the

knowledge that soon she would go to Cairo, where her father had promised her that these other women of the household would not be invited, and where life would be lived in a more European manner. She liked her father and trusted him; but, unfortunately, he had to spend most of his time now in Cairo. Her gloom, however, was due in the main to the fact that Colonel Romance had given no sign of his presence in Ismuay; and, whatever might be her feelings for him, his failure to get in touch with her was the cause of many sorrowful hours. In the darkness she had lain in bed, night after night, restless and sometimes even weeping, while the stars shone in at the window with irritating calm, and the dogs barked in exasperating indifference to her urgent desire for the oblivion of sleep.

Day after day there was nothing for her to do. She attempted a little sewing, but as yet her clothes required no mending or alteration, and she worked without interest. The house did not possess more than twenty English books; and most of these she had either already read or had no wish to read. She did not dare to offer to rearrange the rooms in a more English manner; and, indeed, she did not feel sufficiently interested in the education of the Marcos family to attempt an undertaking of this kind. She sat for the greater part of the day at the window; for, to her dismay, she had found that she was not permitted to walk at large in the town, or even in the garden, without escort. About twice a week she was taken for a short drive by Mrs. Marcos in a closed brougham, but this was more tedious to her even than the imprisonment in the house, where at least the space was not so confined.

Her meals were ordeals. In lieu of breakfast the

members of her family, but partially dressed, drank each a small cup of Turkish coffee, which, in the case of Miriam, was supplemented by a roll and butter. The mid-day meal was served in the European manner, but the cooking was rich, buttery, and highly-spiced. At mid-afternoon, tea, which tasted of hay, was drunk; and in the evening a long dinner of several courses had to be consumed. Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Todros had never learnt to eat their food in silence; and the smacking of their lips, or a sudden hiccup, like the pop of a small bottle, was not a little disconcerting.

The society of these women, as has been said, bored her to distraction; yet they were the only people she was allowed to see. On one occasion, however, her father had taken her to see his office at the *Mudirieh*, and there their landlord the wealthy young Copt, Boutros Bey Andraos, had come in—on business, so it seemed—and had been introduced to her. He was a large, good-natured young man, who had been at Oxford, and spoke English like an Englishman; but he had been somewhat shy, and had not made a very favorable impression. Three years at an English university had not been sufficient, evidently, to correct a certain vulgarity which Miriam was very quick to detect. In thinking it over afterwards she had come to the conclusion that the meeting had been arranged, her father hoping, perhaps, that she might take a fancy to this eligible individual, and he to her. He was said to be very rich, and to be the owner of a fine house in Cairo, where he lived. He had scoffed at Ismuay, his ancestral home, as "a provincial hole," and had frankly laughed at the house there, which he had now rented to Girgis Pasha.

The weather had still been unpleasantly hot during the early days of Miriam's new life, but towards the end of November, after three weeks had passed, it had become cooler and more tolerable. Her father, on one of his brief visits to Ismuay, had asked her with some concern if she were feeling well and happy, for he must have observed that she was languid and colorless.

"Oh yes, I am well enough," she had replied, "but I feel the need of exercise, you know. I am more or less a prisoner in this house."

At this he had sighed, and it was evident that there was something on his mind. "Cheer up!" he had replied. "We shall soon be going to Cairo, and then . . . well, I have promised you, haven't I? You see, I am surrounded here by old-fashioned people who would talk if I let you go about freely. In Cairo it is all so different: here in Ismuay we are fifty years behind the times; yet the Coptic community in this town is very influential, and they might do me considerable harm if they thought I were English in my point of view."

"Do they dislike them so much then?" she asked.

"I'm afraid so," he had answered. "England has been very tactless with us of late, and feeling is running high. No, it is not England: it is the military party. They hate to evacuate; and yet, after all, Egypt is an independent country, and the English have no right to be here now. Their work is done. They gave us a helping hand in 1882, and for twenty years we were grateful for it; but another twenty years and more have passed, and still they keep their troops here, though time after time they have promised to withdraw them. We are like restive horses."

"But you don't mean that you want to go back to the old ways, do you?—the imprisonment of your women and that sort of thing?"

"No, never. That is over. But for some time still we shall have to placate the old-fashioned people in the provinces, for they are really the backbone of the nation. Once the younger party is well established in power in Cairo, however then we shall go right ahead and create a new Egypt on European lines. You will be brave and tolerant, won't you, for my sake? It will not be for long."

She had patted his hand then, and had kissed him. "Yes, for your sake," she had replied, "I will try to be cheerful. . . . By the way," she had added, affecting a casualness which she did not feel, "have you heard anything of Colonel Romance? I thought he was coming here to stay with Captain Erskine."

He had glanced at her uneasily. There was no doubt about it: he had been very uneasy. "I don't care for Captain Erskine," he had told her. "He belongs to the 'hold-on-to-Egypt' school; and he and his friends can never be friends of mine."

Charles Erskine's little house, as has been said, stood upon the flat-surfaced and gently rising desert plain on the east side of Ismuay. Between him and the clustered houses of the town lay rich fields, across which a straight embanked road led back to the desert. A few palms and some clumps of tamarisk grew on the sandy ground at the end of this road, and amidst these the north wind sighed almost continuously, while at sunrise and sunset the chattering of thousands of sparrows produced a clamor which could be heard up at the Englishman's house nearly half a mile back into the desert.

It was a lonely little place, standing, fair and square, in the midst of the dazzling plain of sand and gravel, as though it would defy the sun which beat upon it. The building was unpretentious. Five or six rooms upon a single level, opening on to a wide verandah, and surrounded by a low-walled compound, constituted the entire establishment. It was constructed of unbaked bricks, the interior walls being whitewashed and the exterior mud-plastered; and the furniture was of the simplest—tables, cupboards, shelves and so forth, made on the spot, some by Captain Erskine himself, a few basket chairs, three or four camp-beds, and some grass mats upon the cemented floors.

At morning and evening, along the embanked road

across the fields, a procession of peasants and their cattle passed to and fro. At sunrise the natives set out from amongst the houses of the town or of the neighboring villages, some swinging their thin brown legs over the flanks of diminutive donkeys, others swaying loftily upon disdainful camels, yet others trudging along in the dust. Cows, grey-skinned buffaloes, flocks of sheep and goats, went with them, the yellow dogs growling around them. At night these long lines of men and animals returned to their homes, to the music of the sparrows in the trees. They never came up into the desert: nobody came up there unless he had business at the Englishman's house. At night the road and the fields were also deserted, save by the jackals, the prowling dogs, and the birds of the darkness.

Charles Erskine enjoyed the seclusion of his life in this little house, and was quite content to potter about—a lanky figure in loose grey flannels and a disreputable old felt hat—arranging or testing his mineralogical specimens, drawing maps, writing up his reports, carpentering, and now making his preparations for his next expedition into the desert a few weeks hence. He was a cheerful soul always humming or whistling, fond of a funny story, and never dull nor actually idle, though the purpose of his activities was often too insignificant to be apparent. He had a profound contempt for Egyptian and all other "natives," and, while just and upright in his dealings with them, was a severe task-master. He was very fond of Colonel Romance, now his guest, and was much interested in his welfare. For the honor of England he had to save the poor little chap from this disgraceful native marriage which would ruin his career; and he looked forward to the

time when his friend would grasp him by the hand and say, "Charles, old boy, it was you who saved me from myself when I was infatuated by that beautiful native girl."

Colonel Romance, on the other hand, was anything but cheerful. He had arrived in Egypt full of pleasant anticipation and thrilling expectancy but day by day his disillusionment had widened, like a spreading flood, until the pastures of his heart's hope were wellnigh all submerged. Here in Ismuay he had already stayed for the best part of a month, and not once had he met Miriam nor had he received any communication from her. He had seen her once at the window overlooking the street, but it had been only a glimpse. He had sent her four letters, two by post and two by hand, but he had received no reply, nor did he know whether they had ever reached her. Thrice he had called at the Pasha's house, but on the first two occasions he had been informed that His Excellency was in Cairo, and that the ladies were out driving, and at the third attempt he had been told openly that the Governor was engaged at an official function in the town, and that the ladies did not receive visitors in his absence.

After this rebuff he had called upon the Pasha at his office in the *Mudirieh*, choosing a day when he knew him to be at Ismuay. He had been received with utmost politeness and had asked to be allowed to call upon Miss Marcos; but the Pasha had raised his hand as though in dismay, and had expressed a thousand regrets. "You see, my dear Colonel," he had said, "this is not England, nor even Cairo. We live amongst old-fashioned people who would deem it a scandal for gentlemen to be received by unmarried ladies such as my daughter and her cousin,

Miss Boulos, who is staying at my house, even in the presence of the elder women. Ismuay is sadly behind the times; but later on, when we are in Cairo, I shall be delighted if you will lunch or dine with us."

This dispiriting interview had taken place less than a week ago, and now in desperation he was contemplating some sort of reckless adventure by which he might obtain a word, at any rate, with the woman of his dreams. In these schemes, however, he had found Charles Erskine of little help: in fact, it seemed almost as though he were opposed to them. "There'll be such a hell of a row if you're found out," his friend had said, "and anything of that kind would be bad for British prestige. An English officer caught in a love-intrigue with a native Pasha's daughter—it would sound so shocking, wouldn't it? The whole country would ring with it. Still, you know you can always rely on me to stand by you and help you, if I can."

Then a letter had come from Mrs. Garrett, containing the news, for which he was not unprepared, that she had arrived in Cairo, in flight from the London fogs (so she said), and proposed to spend a couple of months at Shepheard's Hotel. At first he had clutched, like the proverbial drowning man, at the straw which her proximity presented to him; and he had thought of using her in some way for his romantic purpose. But, on turning the matter over in his distressed mind, he had soon realized that she was his enemy in this affair, and would refuse to aid him. She had come out to Egypt, no doubt, for the purpose of keeping an eye upon him, and were she to take any action at all it would be with the object of thwarting him still further.

His days at Ismuay had been tedious in the ex-

treme. There was little to do; and though Charles Erskine had attempted to find some sort of distraction for each afternoon, the mornings and evenings had to be spent, for the most part, in reading the light novels with which the shelves were stacked, or in yawning over last week's newspapers which the mail brought in big bundles from England every third or fourth day. Each morning he sat in the shade of the verandah, flicking the flies away with a fly-whisk, smoking endless pipes and cigarettes, and looking up from time to time from his reading to stare with aching heart across the blazing compound and the sea of sand outside, down to the fields and the distant and shimmering prospect of the town beyond, where, amidst that jumble of ramshackle houses, Miriam was imprisoned. Each evening, under the stars or the moon he sat here, in the light of a candle which was sheltered by a glass globe, and around which the gnats and moths fluttered, until the chill of the night air, or the stings of the sand-flies, sent him indoors to yawn himself to sleep.

The distractions of the afternoon were more varied, but not much more enlivening. One day it would be a five-mile tramp eastwards over the hard glaring surface of the desert to the welcome shadow of the foothills, where the jackals had their undisturbed lairs; and then the five-mile tramp back again, with the westerly sun striking into their faces. Another day it would be a camel-ride of twice that distance or more, to some point of interest among the further hills, where, in the amazing silence of the wilderness, they would munch sweet biscuits and sip hot tea from their thermos-flasks in solitude as unutterable as that of the North Pole. Yet other afternoons would be given to excursions across the river to the great

temple of Isis, a trip up the Nile in a steam launch lent by the Greek manager of the local sugar-factory, a ride on donkey-back throuh the fields northwards to a small ruined temple in the midst of a distant palm-grove, a similar ride southwards to a white-walled Coptic monastery of great and ancient sanctity, a visit to the weekly *suk*, or market, at Ismuay, and so forth. These were hardly the amusements to soothe the heart of a man in love.

Charles Erskine, however, seemed most to enjoy taking his guest to call at the houses of the various half-Europeanized natives of his acquaintances; but Colonel Romance did not guess that there was any ulterior motive in this. It had never entered his head that his friend, in order to shock him was deliberately introducing him to the most unpleasing elements of native life—those elements in which middle-class Egyptians, who had abandoned their dignified Oriental customs in favor of ill-understood European habits, presented a ludicrous spectacle of awkwardness and bad taste. Old-fashioned Egyptians, living still in the manner of the heroes of the Arabian Nights, are both delightful and impressive; Egyptians of the younger generation who have fully adopted English or French manners are charming; but those natives who fall between the two stools, as so many of them do just now, who are neither Oriental nor Occidental, who have neither the grace of the East nor the culture of the West, are often objects only for laughter or pity. It was to houses such as these that Captain Erskine now took his friend.

At one awful house they had been received by a fat Egyptian who wore a black frock-coat and trousers, white cotton socks falling untidily over elastic-sided

boots, and a red tarboush on the back of his head. This man, in whose veins it was obvious that some very dark blood ran, had sat perspiring upon a European sofa, but had tucked one leg under him in the native fashion, and had dreamily played with the front buttons of his trousers during the entire conversation. At another house a very brown little man like a monkey, dressed in a ready-made suit and a dirty collar, had spat into his folded handkerchief at intervals during their talk, and had pointed with pride to the dreadful oleographs upon his walls, representing the crowned heads of Europe and the sovereign of Egypt. At yet another house, a pock-marked Egyptian police officer, clad in an untidy uniform, had introduced his son of six years of age, a beastly little boy with a running nose and a squint, dressed in a sailor-suit of which the trousers reached down to about six inches below his knees, and wearing squeaking black boots upon his feet, and a tarboush, much too big for him, upon his shaven brown head. An awful old woman, unveiled and smirking, hovered in the inner doorway, peeping at the visitors, and exhaling an odour of sour milk and garlic.

It was all as depressing to Colonel Romance as Captain Erskine had intended it to be; and it worried him also to observe that the majority of the men of this class, and, of course, all the peasants and townspeople as he saw them on the roads, in the fields, or at the market, were indisputably and ostentatiously brown. The white Egyptans, in fact, were evidently but the unheeded flower of the flock, wasting their sweetness upon the desert air, the mere froth upon the surface of this rich brown brew. "The point is," he kept saying to himself, "that Miriam is white; and so it doesn't much matter what color

the other Egyptians are. Hang it all! I'm not in love with the whole Egyptian nation; I'm in love with one white flower from its fields, transplanted, and nurtured from infancy in English soil."

He was haunted by the thought that Miriam's silence was not voluntary, that she was more or less a prisoner in her father's house. Perhaps she was waiting for him to rescue her; perhaps she thought of him as a deserter, a friend who had failed her in her need. Yet he was restrained from any bold action by Charles Erskine's reminder that an adventure of that sort might cause a scandal which would react unfavorably upon British prestige. Though he would never admit it, he was a patriot at heart: he loved England, and he shunned the thought of adding to the anxieties of those who were maintaining her fair name in the Valley of the Nile. He was torn between these conflicting interests, and day by day his heart sank lower.

Fate, however, took matters suddenly out of his vacillating hands.

One afternoon, when his friend was otherwise engaged, he went across the river to the temple of Isis, and, while strolling about the ruins of the ancient cemetery situated on the edge of the desert behind the temple, he was somewhat startled to hear three loud explosions in quick succession amongst the rocky hills a short distance to the west. Blasting operations were evidently being conducted, and he remembered having been told that there was a quarry up in the desert at this point, from which stone was being obtained for the building of the large new prison at Ismuay, the spread of refinement in Egypt being marked in most of the cities by the erection of these great gaunt gaols.

He sauntered out in the direction of this quarry, and presently fell in with a grey-bearded native watchman, wearing upon his arm the badge of the Government Department of Antiquities. They had talked together on more than one occasion at the temple, for the man spoke English of a sort, as do most of the watchmen employed by this particular department; and, greeting him now, he asked him a casual question in regard to the blasting operations. The watchman replied that he was now on his way to the quarry, it being his duty to prevent or report on any possible damage which might be done to the ancient tombs in the neighborhood. He added that his own son was employed at the quarry, and he remarked on the dangers of the work, showing, in dramatic pantomime, how a man had to ignite the fuse and then run for his life in order to get out of the range of the explosion, which occurred, apparently, less than two minutes later.

Colonel Romance, having nothing to do in a dreary world but to kill time, walked over the glaring desert with him; and presently, rounding a knoll, they came upon a number of men crouching or standing in the shelter of the tumbled rocks and boulders, waiting for the next explosion in the quarry beyond. An overseer at once accosted them with a warning hand, explaining that a fuse was about to be ignited, and that they must proceed no further.

The watchman was agitated. It was, by chance, his son himself who was to light the fuse; and, though the natives around him laughed at his fears, he showed his distress by waving his extended hands up and down like an old hen flapping its wings. Then, from behind a fallen rock, they watched the man as he went forward to do his work. They saw him trot

across the open ground and clamber up the precipitous hillside in front of them, a hundred yards away; they saw him stoop and ignite the fuse; and they watched him quickly turn and leap down the rocks once more, playing the fool as he hastened to safety, feigning terror for the amusement of his friends, who all laughed and clapped their hands, like children, at his antics.

Suddenly the old father uttered a gasp of dismay. His clown of a son had lost his balance on a narrow ledge, and had fallen heavily on to his back on the rocks six feet below, his head striking the ground. He did not rise; and instantly there was a clamor of ejaculations and cries from those who watched, but not one of them ventured to run forward to the rescue of the stunned man.

Colonel Romance sprang up from behind the sheltering rock. "Come on!" he shouted to his companion, and the next moment he was racing across the open space, followed, after some moments of hesitation, by the old watchman. The injured man was already struggling to rise to his knees, dazed and bewildered, when Colonel Romance reached him and dragged him to his feet. Then, supporting him under the arms, he propelled him forward; and, a moment later, they were joined by the panting old father, who vigorously helped to pull his reeling son over the open ground. They had not yet reached shelter, however, when the explosion shook the ground, and a volume of broken rock went up like a fountain into the air behind them. For a moment the little Colonel thought his last breath was breathed, as the falling fragments of stone clattered about him; and then, releasing his burden, he stood up with an exultant laugh. They were untouched;

and there, sitting upon the ground, was the bewildered cause of the excitement rubbing his silly head, while his old father, waving his hands about like a maniac, was standing beside him, and the gesticulating natives were running towards them, shouting praises to Allah and all the saints. But upon the spot from which the younger man had been dragged a heap of great rock was piled, under whose weight he would most probably have been buried.

A few moments later Colonel Romance was the centre of a demonstration embarrassing in its enthusiasm. They patted his back, they wrung his hands, they formed a shouting circle, dancing like excited children around him, while the old watchman lifted up his hands to Heaven and chanted a pæan of praise in the manner of an ancient prophet. The injured man, with a lump like an egg behind his ear, was soon sufficiently recovered to join in the tumult, alternately weeping upon his father's neck and clasping the Colonel's hand.

"Oh, shut up!" the latter at last ejaculated; and soon he had successfully withdrawn himself from their attentions, and was walking back to the river, stirred into something approaching happiness by his recent adventure. Excitement was, after all, as the breath of life to him; and, moreover, he was conscious of having done a fine thing, and having done it without a scratch.

"That's the stuff to give 'em," he muttered, beaming with pleasure. "That'll show 'em what Englishmen stand for." He felt as pleased with himself as a schoolboy would be who had performed the hat trick at an important cricket match, to the glory of the school; or as an international polo-player who had hit a goal, to the honor of the English team.

"Damned silly thing to do, though," he added. "I might have been killed or maimed or something. But never mind, I'm safe and sound, and England's one up in this place." He marched down the pathway to the river, swinging along, and whistling "The British Grenadiers."

That night the watchman and his son came to Captain Erskine's house after dark, and having asked for an interview, were received by Colonel Romance upon the verandah. Again they expressed their gratitude to him, and asked if they could do anything for him in return. Then, quite suddenly, the great idea came to him. He told them, under promise of secrecy, that he wished to see again the daughter of the Governor of Ismuay, whom he had met in England, but that he was prevented from communicating with her; and he asked them if they could devise any means by which he could do so.

The two natives replied at once that the matter was not impossible. The gardener at the Pasha's house was related to them, and they would get into touch with him that very night.

Colonel Romance was immensely excited. At last something was happening, things were moving; and he went to bed at length eager to meet his destiny after the tedious weeks of inaction. Next afternoon he went across to the temple of Isis once more, and there had a long and mysterious talk with the old watchman. The Governor's daughter, he learnt, spent most of her time in the upper room of the house, the windows of which overlooked the garden. In front of these windows there was, as he knew, a sycamore tree, very easily to be climbed. Above this room there was a trap-door connecting it with the roof. From ten o'clock to noon every morning the

Pasha was at his office, and a brave man might then slip into the garden by way of the gap in its wall, and climb the tree, the foliage of which was so dense that he could swing about from branch to branch at his pleasure, and not be observed. A small present to the gardener would insure that man's total blindness to all that was occurring.

It was an enthralling prospect, and Colonel Romance determined to emulate the nimble monkey at the earliest opportunity. Nobody need know—not even Charles Erskine; and the honor of England would not be endangered. He was sick to death of kicking his heels: he was fed up! Adventure once more beckoned to him, and he would follow the summons with rejoicing heart.

Chapter XII *In the Governor's House*

MIRIAM lolled at the open window on the south side of the *salon*—that dreadful upper room—looking down sleepily at the narrow, dusty street where, just now, two small girls in long gown-like dresses of dirty blue were collecting horses' dung with their little brown monkey hands—to be baked in the sun and used as fuel. The two other windows, which overlooked the garden to the east, were also open, but the shutters were closed across them in protection from that blazing golden effulgence which beat down upon the whitewashed walls of this side of the house from above the foliage and the shadows of the sycamore tree; for, the hour being nearly eleven o'clock in the morning, the sun was high in the heavens, and was, indeed, already begining to pass around the corner to the window at which the girl was seated. Soon she would have to close these shutters and open the others—exchange the view of the street and the opposite houses for the view of the sycamore and the garden, as she had done day after day until the monotony of it had become madening.

November was ended, and now, at the beginning of December, the air was cool in the shade, but the sunlight was still too hot to be pleasant. These weeks of enforced inaction had produced a mild form of coma in Miriam, and her drowsy contemplation of the street was tinged with annoyance at the thought that

she would soon have to arouse herself to the prodigious effort of changing her place. She was alone in the room, and she muttered aloud, "Oh, drat the thing!"—and yawned as a caged tiger yawns.

Presently the din of a native band came to her ears, and soon she was watching a small procession come from a side street and advance towards her, headed by eight musicians dressed in dark blue uniforms ornamented with red braid. Except for their red tarboushes and their brown faces they might have been members of a village band in England. Three of them were playing flutes, three had brass instruments, one was clashing cymbals together, and one was vigorously beating a big drum. The tune they were rendering was "Yip-i-addy-i-ay," which, with the addition of some extra twiddles upon the flutes, has now been adopted throughout Egypt as a popular native march. Behind the bandsmen there was an open carriage drawn by two emaciated horses, and in this a small boy of some five years of age, wearing an Egyptian suit and a tarboush, was seated alone. Several veiled women walked after the carriage, uttering the shrill joy-cry of the Egyptians; and behind them came a small crowd of townspeople, enthralled by the music.

Miriam had seen such a procession before, and knew its significance. The boy was being conducted in pomp to the barber to be circumcised. It was a ceremony which called for great family rejoicings, and everybody, except the scared little victim, was in the highest spirits.

The procession passed down the street and out of sight, the appalling music fading away into the common noises of the town—the barking of dogs, the braying of donkeys, the crowing of cocks, the clash-

ing together of two brass bowls by a vendor of sweet drinks, the cries of carriage-drivers giving warning to pedestrians with the words, "Mind your feet!"—the rhythmic song of the workmen engaged in building a mosque not far away, the shrieking of two quarrelling women on a housetop across the road, the warbling of an obscene love ditty by a small boy passing along the street upon a camel's back, the jingling of the trappings of a trotting donkey, ridden by a fat man in voluminous native robes, the creaking and crunching of cart wheels, the endless belaboring of patient beasts, the grunting of camels, and so forth.

Miriam was too indifferent to look around when her three female relations entered the room—the rotund and wall-eyed Mrs. Marcos; the furtive little Mrs. Todros, her face powdered so white that it appeared to have been dipped in the flour-bin; and the buxom Rosa, squinting diabolically, her eyebrows arched in their habitual amazement. The three seemed always to move about the house together, directed by Mrs. Marcos; and their coming into the room now suggested a concerted plot: they had, perhaps, realized that Miriam was bored, and had decided to cheer her up.

"Ah," said Mrs. Marcos, "you were listening to the pretty musics, didn't you? It was the son of Yusuf Bey Halîm, going to the *tuhur*: how do you say?—the . . ."

"The circumcision," Rosa told her brightly. "Do they have the circumcision in England, Miriam?"

"I'm sure I don't know," she answered, smiling. "One doesn't talk about such things."

"Why not one doesn't?" asked Mrs. Marcos, seating herself heavily upon a chair. "It is a very

happy day. Jesus Christ got it made, too."

Miriam turned her eyes to the street once more. Presently Mrs. Todros whispered to Rosa to play the piano to them; and this the girl did with no reluctance. As though wound up, she played through the well-known valse from "The Chocolate Soldier," pressing her right foot hard upon the loud pedal throughout. The rhythm was that of a quick march. Mrs. Todros leant back in her chair and marked time (not the same time) with her foot, humming parts of another tune that in her mind she had confused with the song upon which Rosa was wreaking the world's vengeance.

"Shall I play more music?" the girl asked, when she had finished.

"Certainly, of course," said Mrs. Marcos. "The music is to make happy."

She turned her pale, round face to Miriam, who met the look with a forced smile.

"Play us the music of the soldiers," said Mrs. Todros.

"Shall I, Miriam?" Rosa asked.

"Oh yes, dear," replied she, groaning inwardly, "that will be very nice."

Rosa played "Keep the Home Fires Burning," with extraordinary vigor, every third or fourth chord being incorrectly selected by her fat fingers. Miriam fidgeted about unhappily, and at last, rising to her feet, went over to the piano.

"How clever of you to play that charming thing," she said. "How do you know what all these little black dots mean?" She secured the music as she spoke, and put it back upon the top of the piano.

Rosa beamed. "It took me a long time to learn to play good music," she said.

Mrs. Todros chimed in: "We have to learn so much at these days, I mean, yes."

"When I was young," Mrs. Marcos remarked, "we learnt to have a good religion and look after our children. Now there is the English language, and the French language, and music, and the gramophone, and . . . and . . ."

"And the newspaper," said Mrs. Todros, "and dresses of fashion, and eating with the knives and the forks, I mean, and . . ."

"I don't know what we are arriving to," Mrs. Marcos declared, "we are growing so cultured."

"Yes," said Rosa, "we are more cultured than the English, is it not?"

"The English," Mrs. Todros stated, "are not as cultured as the French. Cairo is more like Paris than London, I mean."

Mrs. Marcos nodded her head wisely. "Girgis Pasha is, of course, more high educational than many other men," she said. "When he came back from University Eton he said that he had learnt all the things of England, and he oppressed us all to learn them. We must thank him for our high condition. Some people say that he is too similar to the Englishman. But he is not."

"It is owing to my education that Mr. Todros married me," said that gentleman's wife with some suddenness. "And now, *inshallah,* Rosa will attract a good husband by her music."

"But Miriam will obtain a more good husband," said Rosa, taking hold of her cousin's hand.

"That is the reason for why she has been educationed in England," Mrs. Marcos pointed out.

"Don't let us talk about marriage," said Miriam, looking out of the window once more.

"It is the best matter to talk," declared Mrs. Todros. "Allah! it is something to have a husband." She leered at Miriam, and made a voluptuous movement of her body which in a Western ballroom might have passed unnoticed as some form of "shimmy," but which in its present connection was entirely indecent.

"Of all the men I have ever met——" said Miriam, turning to them again, and being about to swear falsely that men did not interest her.

"Ss—s—sh," hissed Mrs. Marcos, holding up her hands. "We know that you have met men and have spoken at them, but it does not make pleasure to hear you say of it. I know your father think different, but I continue to the system of when I was young. It is not decent to meet men who are not your relations, to laugh with them, and to show yourself to them. When you are married you will see always your husband. That is enough. How can you bear him children in his likeness if your mind is full of the faces of other men?"

"In England and in France," asked Rosa, eagerly, "you see your husband before you are married to him, is it not?"

"Yes," Miriam answered, "and you fall in love with him sometimes." She left her seat at the window, and wandered aimlessly across the room.

"That is the nonsense," said Mrs. Marcos. "To fall in love before marriage is of the poetry, not of the life. How can you fall in love until you are married? And how can he love you true until you have borne him a son?"

"Oh," Mrs. Todros dissented, "Mr. Todros love me no sooner as he behold me. And he loved me continued, although my three first children were only

girls. He would have loved me if I had no children."

"It is wonderful!" cried Rosa, with enthusiasm. "I thought no man loved a woman who had no children. *Inshallah*, I shall have fifteen children."

"That's right, Rosa," said Miriam, languidly amused. "I hope you will. That is one thing in which the Egyptians women are superior to the English. They are proud of serving the main purpose for which they are intended. Still, fifteen might keep them a bit too busy, perhaps. A woman is, after all, something more than a machine."

"Men govern the world," said Mrs. Marcos. "Women give the men. That is our business, and for why we are loved."

"It's one of the reasons, certainly," Miriam answered, "but not the only one. Otherwise men would be madly in love with railway trains and . . . and . . . scissors and . . . other mechanical things."

"Miriam," said Mrs. Todros, very gravely, "you talk strange. I don't understand."

"Don't worry about it," she laughed. "The English sense of humor is different from the Egyptian. In fact," she added in a lower voice, "the Egyptians haven't got a sense of nonsense at all."

"What are you saying?" asked Mrs. Marcos. "'Sense of nonsense'—what is it?"

"Oh, I mean our jokes are different from yours," Miriam explained.

"*Your* jokes?" queried Mrs. Todros. "But you are not English."

Miriam bit her lip, and a look of pain came into her face. "No, I know; but I have lived in England so long I feel as though I were English." She went again to the window, and noticed that an empty car-

riage was just moving away from the front door below.

"Miriam," said Rosa, looking up into her face. "You look to be unhappy. Shall I play more music to you?"

"No, no, no, no!" she cried.

"Don't you like music?" asked Rosa, much surprised and hurt. "You are very thick to please."

"*Thick*, Rosa?" Mrs. Todros corrected, "you mean . . . er . . . *tight*."

"Or perhaps *difficult*," added Miriam, giving Rosa a friendly kiss on the forehead. "Yes, I know I'm difficult. Forgive me, dear. Yes, play me something . . . very softly."

Rosa sat down at the piano once more, and began to play her showpiece, Mendelssohn's "March of the Priests"; but she had not proceeded far when the door opened and Girgis Pasha entered the room, holding up his hand to stop her.

"Miriam," he said, going across to the window with rapid steps, "I have a surprise for you. Mrs. Garrett is here."

"Mrs. Garrett!" Miriam exclaimed, resentment in her voice. "What's she want here?"

Her father looked at her intently. "You don't seem very pleased," he said.

"Well, I hope you aren't going to let her come up here." She indicated the whole room and the people in it, with a scornful sweep of her hand.

"I don't see why not," he replied, a little sharply.

Familiarity had accustomed him to his womenfolk, and the room was, at any rate, clean and airy. "She came to call on me at the *Mudirieh*, and I have driven her over here especially to see you."

"I don't think I want to see her," Miriam answered, in evident distress.

"Oh, come, come," he laughed. "You must be polite, my dear girl. I see what you mean, but really I think you exaggerate." He turned to Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Todros. "An English lady, a friend of Miriam's, has come to call," she explained. "Perhaps she had better receive her alone."

Mrs. Marcos drew herself up. "No, we will remain," she answered decisively; and the Pasha shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, very well," said Miriam. "Bring her up."

"That's right," her father exclaimed, with satisfaction. "It is always best to face a situation without sensitiveness. I know exactly how you feel, but she will make allowances: I have already explained to her . . ."

Mrs. Marcos did not understand the meaning of these asides, and looked from one to the other in perplexity. "Explained?" she asked. "What have you explained?"

The Pasha smiled at them over his shoulder as he went to the door. "I have explained that Ismuay and London are distant from one another in time as well as in space," he said, "but fortunately I don't find that fact as distressing as Miriam does. . . . I'll bring Mrs. Garrett up after a few minutes."

As soon as he had gone downstairs again Miriam went to her room to powder her nose. Mrs. Todros also scampered off; but Mrs. Marcos, fat and complacent, held her ground, and ordered Rosa to remain with her. Mrs. Todros presently returned, her face again powdered, her lips painted scarlet, her eyes thickly blackened, and her eyebrows penciled. She was carrying a large bottle of scent, and this she

handed to Mrs. Marcos, who solemnly sprinkled herself, Rosa, the furniture, and even the carpet, with the pungent liquid. It was apparent that a visit from an Englishwoman was an event of great significance in their lives.

Mrs. Marcos retained her serenity with bravery until the voice of the Pasha was heard upon the stairs. Then, suddenly, she lost her head, and bounced round the room like a balloon in an eddy of wind. She pushed Rosa towards the piano, and thrust a piece of music into her hand; she caught Mrs. Todros by the arm, and dragged her to the chair by the window; and, lastly, she sank back upon another chair, pretending to read a book which she had snatched from the shelf.

The door was opened by the Pasha, and the three women at once froze into their attitudes; but, at a disapproving look and half-concealed gesture from the Governor, they hastily left their places again, and huddled, disorganised, in the middle of the room.

"Do come in, won't you?" he said, holding the door open, and bowing.

Mrs. Garrett, clad in a smartly-made travelling dress, entered the room, but stopped short when she found herself face to face with Miriam's amazing relatives. She gave a quick, nervous, little laugh, and looked anxiously to the Governor for guidance.

"Mrs. Tawfik Marcos, my sister-in-law," he said, indicating that portly matron, with a delicate movement of his raised hand, like the gesture of an orchestral conductor. Mrs. Marcos made a peculiar sound

—a kind of rattle—in her throat, and offered her fat fingers to be shaken.

"Mrs. Elias Todros, my sister," continued the Governor, repeating the gesture. Mrs. Todros giggled and likewise held out a trembling hand.

"And this is Rosa Boulos, my niece," he went on, indicating the blushing girl, who sprang forward automatically. Mrs. Garrett shook hands with each of the women, and murmured some words of greeting, nodding her head rapidly at them. "What a bonnie girl," she said, smiling nervously at Rosa, and wondering why such words should have risen to her lips. "Your niece, did you say?"

"Yes," he answered. "She and Miriam have become good friends, I am glad to say, though their upbringing has been along such different lines."

Mrs. Garrett smiled, and nodded, not knowing what to say, while the three women stood round her in silence, staring at her nervously. "What a charming room you have here," she said presently, to break the rather startling silence. "So sunny and . . . er . . . *bright*."

"This is only a furnished house I am renting," the Governor explained. "It is pretty awful, but it serves our purpose. Do sit down."

Mrs. Garrett sat down upon the blue plush sofa, whereupon the three women, sighing loudly, lowered themselves on to the edge of the three chairs which they had hurriedly placed in a semi-circle in front of her. Girgis Pasha waited till his relations were settled, eyeing them critically as they primly arranged their garments; then he excused himself, and with a promise to return later, went out of the room. An awkward silence followed: awkward, that is to say, for Mrs. Garrett, though one of the recognized

features of social intercourse amongst Egyptians, who will sit and sigh at one another for five consecutive minutes without a word being exchanged, except perhaps an occasional repetition of the original forms of greeting.

"How d'you do!" Mrs. Marcos said at length, bowing to her guest, and thereby causing her much bewilderment.

"Do you all speak English?" Mrs. Garrett asked, when she had recovered her nerve. "I know no Arabic, I'm afraid."

Mrs. Marcos answered with dignity. "All our family speak English in preference to the Arabic language," she said, and Mrs. Todros sighed loudly.

"Ah, yes, of course," Mrs. Garrett murmured. "Am I to see Miriam?" she added, after a pause.

"Where is Miriam?" asked Mrs. Marcos, looking round the room as though she had mislaid her. "Rosa, go and call Miriam."

Rosa waddled out of the room, blushing

"So this is Miriam's home," said Mrs. Garrett at length. "How delightful! You know I had the pleasure of her society on two or three occasions. Such a sweet girl. You must be very proud of her."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Todros in unison, swaying slowly to and fro.

Rosa returned presently, and resumed her stiff seat upon the edge of her chair, remarking that Miriam was just coming. Another long pause followed, during which Mrs. Todros might have been observed to be suffering from that acute form of distress which, in women unused to the gay world, denotes the birth of a remark. She cleared her throat and clutched the arms of her chair.

"You are travelling in Egypt?" she piped abruptly.

"Yes, I arrived in Cairo last week from England," Mrs. Garret positively jabbered, "and came up to Luxor for a few days' sightseeing; and as Ismuay is so near, I thought I must come over here as soon as I arrived, just to see Miriam in her own home. So I took the morning train, and here I am. I must go on soon to see your famous temple ruins, of course; and then I shall go back by Cook's steamer this afternoon. I suppose you know Luxor very well."

"Yes," said Mrs. Marcos with a sigh. "My son is officer in the police there."

An untidy servant girl, dressed, apparently, in a long flannel nightgown, put her head into the room, a wide, frightened grin upon her face.

"Coffee!" said Mrs. Marcos loudly in Arabic, and the head disappeared.

"And what is your son's name?" Mrs. Garrett asked.

"Jesus," Mrs. Marcos replied, at which her visitor started visibly. Jesus, or Yessa, as it is more ordinarily called in Egypt, is a common name amongst the Copts; but Mrs. Garrett, not knowing this, feared for a moment that Mrs. Marcos was the victim of some Messianic delusion, and her heart beat fast.

"Have you any other children?" she asked, feeling that she must carry the conversation quickly away from a dangerous topic.

"Yes, about twelve," replied Mrs. Marcos in an indifferent tone.

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed the visitor.

Mrs. Todros clutched her chair. "Mrs. Marcos

is very fortunate," she said. "And only a very few of her children died."

"Yes, only three," Mrs. Marcos sighed, adding casually: "And two daughters."

"And have you many children?" said Mrs. Garrett, turning to Mrs. Todros.

"No, not many," replied that lady. 'I have only six. But then, I continue."

Their visitor threw up her hands. "What a very populous country Egypt must be," she exclaimed. "Now I have no children at all, and my husband is dead."

A murmur of sympathy passed round the room.

"I hope you will soon marry again a husband," said Mrs. Marcos, now losing some of her nervousness, "though I know how difficult it is when a woman has been childless to her first husband."

Mrs. Todros bent forward mysteriously. "They say that the ruins of the ancient temple here have great power," she said. "Perhaps if you sit on the altar you will be cured."

"Cured? Cured of what?" asked Mrs. Garrett in some surprise.

"Perhaps you will have children when you are married again," Mrs. Todros explained.

"God is very heavy upon some women," sighed Mrs. Marcos. "But do not despair. It is true that the altar makes the miracle."

"Thank you for your kindly words," she said, when she had regained her breath. "I'll try not to despair. Still, they do say the best carpenters make the fewest chips."

"Ah, here is Miriam," cried Mrs. Todros, as the door opened, and the girl entered the room. She was dressed in the simple white summer dress which she

had been wearing previous to her friend's arrival. Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Todros looked disaprovingly at it; but into Mrs. Garrett's face there passed an expression of undisguised admiration as she rose to meet her late protégée, whose recent adventures did not seem to have diminished the beauty of her face.

The meeting was, perhaps, a little stiff, a little awkward. Mrs. Garrett realized somewhat keenly that she had been both rude and unkind to Miriam on that memorable evening in London; and Miriam felt that she owed an apology to her late benefactress for her ungoverned outburst. The elder woman, however, had determined to go through the ordeal with as little discomfort as possible; and for this reason she assumed a slightly quizzical manner, as she held out her hand to the girl. Miriam, on her part, although glad to see a kindly Western face once more, considered the shame of her position bitterly, and felt a sort of resentment at this intrusion on scenes which she would have wished undiscovered.

"How do you do, Miriam?" said Mrs. Garrett. "This is *so* interesting to me to see you in these surroundings." She glanced with pity at the girl even as she uttered the words, and her eyes told plainly enough that she spoke in a half jest.

Miriam's manner remained cold. "I'm glad you find it interesting," she replied. "Still, curiosity is hardly one of the virtues."

Mrs. Garrett digested this with good humor. "Well," she smiled, "*that's* a bad beginning."

Mrs. Marcos nodded her head serenely at both of them, understanding the exchange of thrusts not at all. Mrs. Garrett took Miriam's hand in hers and led her to the sofa, whereon they both sat a little stiffly.

"And how is the world that I have so very effec-

tively left?" asked Miriam, forcing the conversation.

"I left it soon after you did, you know," her friend replied.

"Your plans were made with rapidity, weren't they?" the girl remarked icily. "I suppose you came to see that your brother-in-law didn't get into mischief?"

"Yes," the elder woman replied, firmly, still with a slight smile at the corners of her mouth, "that was my object in coming. But I don't see how he possibly can. Surroundings have so much to do with that sort of thing. Candidly, do you think it likely?"

She looked round the room as she asked the question; glanced at Mrs. Todros, whose mouth thereupon fell open; stared a moment at Rosa, who stared back as though petrified; passed her eyes over Mrs. Marcos, who murmured, "How do you do?" under her breath, feeling that polite expressions were called for; and, lastly, returned her gaze to Miriam's deep, sullen eyes.

"Candidly," said the girl, her color heightening, "I am convinced that he will not be permitted to make a fool of himself. He is not yet acquainted with the surroundings, but I am, and that is quite sufficient. Is there anything further you'd like to ask in regard to the subject? Otherwise it might be well to start a topic of more general interest. I am afraid my relatives haven't understood a word of our conversation yet." She looked anxiously at them.

"Oh yes," said Mrs. Marcos loftily. "You were speaking about your brother, didn't you, yes? You do not wish him to become a fool? Poor man, is he afflicted in his head?"

"I sometimes think so," Mrs. Garret responded, smiling once more at the girl.

"He will be, if he goes on with what he said he was going to do," Miriam muttered, bitterly.

"I'm sure I'm very glad to hear you say so," said Mrs. Garrett.

"But surely," Mrs. Todros broke in, "you would not be glad if he became a fool?"

Mrs. Marcos reproved her with a patronizing glance. 'Those that are afflicted in their heads," she declared, turning to her visitor, "are sometimes belonging of God. But have you tried burning of his neck?"

"Not yet," said Mrs. Garrett. "So far he has only singed himself."

Laughter crept into her voice, and Miriam showed signs of unbending sufficiently to respond to it.

"The *gonfid*," exclaimed Mrs. Todros with such suddenness that Mrs. Garret jumped; "the *gonfid* . . . how do you call it?—hodgeheg . . ."

"I beg your pardon," gasped Mrs. Garrett, "the *what?*"

"Hedgehog," cried Rosa, some tones louder than she had expected, relapsing at once into a hot silence.

"The hedgehog," continued Mrs. Todros, casting a withering glance at her niece, "is used as a remedy for the fool. Have you used it for your brother? You stew the left eye and the heart in the water of boiled onions, and annoint his face with it, while he is asleep."

Mrs. Garrett and Miriam got up together with agonized faces, and steered blindly towards the piano, the former endeavoring, apparently, to swallow her handkerchief.

Mrs. Todros half rose from her chair. "Would

you like to hear Rosa play the musics, I mean?" she asked.

Something like a wail broke from Miriam, who was frienziedly turning over the music on top of the piano.

"Mrs. Garrett is not fond of music," she choked, with averted head.

"Oh yes, I am Miriam," her friend answered. "You know I am."

"No," Miriam insisted. "You like Beethoven, Bach, and Brahms, and all that sort of twaddle. You won't like our refined selections." She turned over the music, ''Keep the Home Fires Burning,' 'The Honeysuckle and the Bee,' 'The Washington Post,' 'The Chocolate Soldier,' 'Violets,' 'The High Life One-step.'"

It was a very great relief to Mrs. Garrett to observe that Miriam had unbent, and had allowed herself to laugh in this unrestrained manner with her. It had cleared the atmosphere wonderfully. While wishing to be kind, she had been unable to avoid saying a sharp word or two, and she was sorry for it. But Miriam had come very much closer to her while they had laughed together; and they stood now on a different footing, a kind of sympathy holding them once more.

"Look here," Mrs. Garrett whispered, as she turned the music over; "I must see you alone."

"I doubt if you can," Miriam muttered.

"Leave it to me," said her friend, returning thereupon to the sofa. The sun now streamed into the room through the open south window, lighting up in an amazing manner the blue plush furniture. The three Egyptian women remained glued to their chairs,

Mrs. Marcos swaying slightly as though conscious of the glue.

Their visitor gazed out of the window. "What a sunny, healthy country Egypt is," she exclaimed, turning again to her entertainers. "How well you all look. Miriam, dear, I hope you have had no return of those pains in your side?" She winked furiously at Miriam as she asked the question.

"What pains?" asked Miriam blankly, thereby producing further paroxysms in Mrs. Garrett's left orbit. "Oh . . . er . . . oh no, thank you . . . What? . . . Oh . . . yes. Yes, I've felt them occasionally . . . er . . ."

Mrs. Garrett turned to Mrs. Marcos. "I must tell you," she said, "that I am something of a doctor, and I came here partly with the intention of examining Miriam's side, as I did in London."

"Has she illness?" asked Mrs. Todros. "Miriam, you have not told us."

"It was trying to cure it quietly myself," said the girl, still rather mystified.

"Is it a swelling of the stomach?" Mrs. Todros asked.

"No, no," Mrs. Garrett answered airily, "only an undulation, a *slight* swelling."

"Oh yes, I understand," said Mrs. Todros. "That is easily to cure."

"Now, do tell me what you would suggest," Mrs. Garrett asked, giving a furtive glance at Miriam.

Mrs. Todros said a few words in Arabic to Mrs. Marcos, who replied, "Yes, I think," in precise English.

"The blood of a mouse," said Mrs. Todros, earnestly, "mixed with butter, and rubbed on the place. . . . But you must strike off the head of the

mouse with a new sword, they say. It cured Rosa when she was a baby, and became inflated with airs. Perhaps Miriam has an air."

"A very noble one," said Mrs. Garrett, with gravity.

"Shall I get a mouse?" asked Rosa eagerly, and Mrs. Garrett liked her for the first time.

"No," she said, "I think it will be best if I examine Miriam first. Perhaps there will be no need to kill the poor little mouse. I wonder if you would all mind leaving us alone for a little, so that Miriam may . . . er . . . undress. Miriam is so very shy."

"But she need not take off many clothes," said Mrs. Marcos.

"Oh yes," Mrs. Garrett replied quickly, "all of them, I assure you. These swellings, you know . . . er . . . extend. She must take off every stitch. And she is so shy."

Mrs. Marcos rose. "Very well," she said. "We can retire to some of the other reception rooms. This house has so many rooms to be sit in."

"All equally bright, I have no doubt," said Mrs. Garrett cordially. "Thank you. Please do not let us be disturbed for half an hour. We will lock the door from the inside, and we'll call out [illegible] Miriam [illegible]

[illegible] the Mar[illegible]

as
some-
signal of
the door.

"Look here, Father: we want your help," she whispered. "Mrs. Garrett and I want to have a talk about old times; so we've told a good old lie, so as to get the others out of the room." She related their strategy to him. "Please help us. Get them away, and go away yourself, too, will you?"

He did not seem to be pleased, but he could not do otherwise than agree. "Very well, my dear," he said. "I'll see that you are left alone for half an hour."

Miriam put her arms round his neck, and kissed him. "He's a wonderful man, my father," she declared, turning to Mrs. Garrett.

"Now, Miriam," said Mrs. Garrett, as they sat down together upon the appalling sofa, "let's be frank and straightforward with each other—no sparring."

"Very well," the girl replied. "Why have you come here? What business is it of yours to know how I live?"

"Well, I own I came partly out of curiosity," she admitted. "It is natural that I should be interested in you and your life. We got to know each other pretty well in England. But I also came partly to tell you I was sorry for being rude to you in London. I am really sorry, Miriam."

"Oh, you needn't speak of the events of that evening," the girl answered. "I was very rude too. I've gone over it a hundred times in my mind, and I fully understand your attitude. I didn't know my home was so . . . so *impossible;* but now I say to myself it is no wonder you all edged away from me."

"But your father is delightful," Mrs. Garrett remarked. "When he came to the house that day, and I realized what a cultured man he was, I could have kicked myself for being so insular and so snobbish—and that's the truth. But, frankly, since I've been in Egypt I have seen that there really is a gulf between us. I want to be quite candid, Miriam, you see."

"Yes, and I'm going to be candid too. It's no

use hiding anything. You've seen how I live. You know now what I am. All that you have seen is, I suppose, nothing to what is in my blood. I must be tainted through and through with this sort of thing." She waved her arm round the room. "You were perfectly right to edge away from me."

"Oh, it isn't as bad as all that. Your family here are only impossible because they are stumbling about ridiculously on the threshold of Western civilization. Your father was educated in England, and he's all right. It's only these others; and it all goes to prove what you were saying the other day, that education matters more than anything else."

"I wish I could think it merely ridiculous," said Miriam, rising to her feet and walking to and fro, "but it is so much worse than that. I don't know why I'm saying this to you. I'm humbled, you see. I haven't an ounce of pride left. I've stood it all these three weeks, and I feel that I can't go on. You have no idea what it is like. Look at this tawdriness, this vulgarity," she cried, pointing to the room. "Do you think it comes out only in the furniture and in the dress and deportment of my relations? I tell you that is its mildest expression. Their minds are scarlet and blue plush, sham gilt and cheap imitations. I wish to goodness I hadn't been sent to England to be educated, to be estranged from my country. It never does any Egyptian any good to be educated in Europe. It's a failure every time. Look at my father! He's a fish out of water here. He has so strong a sense of family duty that he tolerates these women, and is perfectly sweet to them: but he's not the happy man he would be if he hadn't been educated into seeing their faults."

"You poor child," said Mrs. Garrett. "What do you do with yourself all day?"

"Sit on that window-sill," Miriam answered, with a forced laugh, "and watch the snails rush past. That's about it. There is absolutely nothing to do, except listen to the sort of conversation you have just heard, and the sort of music I saved you from. I can't even amuse myself by writing letters, for in the first place I could not get them posted without immense difficulty, and in the second place there is nobody to write to. My friends wouldn't care to know me any longer."

"I think I remember hearing one offer of friendship made to you," said Mrs. Garrett, with a smile.

Miriam turned her eyes full upon her. "I don't know why I should allow that subject to be opened," she said, with deliberation, "but I do allow it. I have not seen or heard from Colonel Romance since I landed in Egypt. He is here in Ismuay, I suppose: he said he was coming up to stay with Captain Erskine. But there's little chance of our seeing each other, I am glad to say."

"Why do you say you are glad?" Mrs. Garrett asked. "Don't you want his friendship?"

"How *can* I want it?" Miriam asked, passionately. "Do you think I am proud of all this? Oh, can't you realize what I feel? I am ashamed, really ashamed. No, I won't say I am ashamed of being an Egyptian. I should be happy enough if I were just a real Oriental, I suppose, a true native of this country, wearing native dress, thinking native thoughts, and unacquainted with any but native ideas. There would be some romance in that, and I should have the pleasure of contemplating you and your people from a lofty standpoint of indifference or amuse-

ment. But my family have abandoned the old order, and have adopted this half-baked sort of life, and the result is this. Oh," she broke out, "I can't stand it."

She sat down upon the window-sill, drumming with her heel upon the wainscoting. Mrs. Garrett went over to her and put her hand upon her shoulder.

"Miriam," she said, "I have something to say to you. When I came here to-day, I wanted to satisfy myself that you were safely back in the environment in which you belonged by birth. I have come to Egypt to keep a motherly eye on my brother-in-law, for there is no doubt in my mind that he is in love with you, and you can understand what a tragedy it would be if he were to entangle himself with . . ."

"Yes, I know," Miriam replied, miserably. "Don't put it into words: we both understand."

"I am not saying anything aginst your family," Mrs. Garrett explained, "and Heaven knows I have nothing but admiration now for you yourself. But you have this millstone around your neck which would drag you both under. The English think of Egyptians either as Oriental 'natives' pure and simple, or else as these 'half-baked' sort of people, as you call them; and Colonel Romance would have to leave the Army, and would be cold-shouldered all round, if he got mixed up with them. Very well then, it is my prayer that you and he may keep apart, and I think my prayer is justifiable. But now that I have seen what your life is, do you think I can go away and leave you in it? Why, I should not be able to sleep o' nights for worrying about you."

"Then I'm afraid you'll have to take many a sleeping draught," said Miriam, after a moment's

pause, in which she had reviewed speedily the possibilities of escape from her imprisonment.

"I have a better remedy than that, Miriam," Mrs. Garrett continued. "I want you to come away with me. I'll be your chaperon, and I'll make it my business to find you a husband." Miriam smiled. "Why, my dear girl, there are plenty of men in the world whose positions would not suffer by marriage with you, and who would thank their lucky stars for their good fortune in possessing so charming, so beautiful a wife. In America you'd be received at once; why, they'd simply eat you in New York. I'm not joking about you. You *are* charming, you know, and it is only just the misfortune of your birth that makes you ineligible for the highest positions in the land in England. In America we are not so stand-offish, except about 'colored' blood; and you haven't got any of that. There must be nice Egyptians, too, if only they can be found. Will you leave this prison and come? I only make one stipulation, and that is that you promise not to accept my brother-in-law when he proposes to you, as he is certain to do."

Miriam remained silent for awhile, and her thoughts ranged through the province of her existence, scrutinizing it from every direction; but wherever she looked—if one might judge by her face—there she saw only darkness and intolerable gloom.

"No," she said at length, "I must stay here. I've got a duty to my father to perform. He has spent so much money on me and given me an education which he believed would be an advantage to me. And here at any rate I am not despised. But with you I should often meet people who would jib at the thought of me as soon as they knew I was an Oriental."

"My dear girl," Mrs. Garrett replied, "nobody of any breeding jibs at an Oriental. What they jib at is the thought of marriage with an Oriental, and they presume that the Oriental feels just the same way at the thought of marriage with a Westerner. It is only the marriage of East and West that worries one. In fact, it's the thought of half-caste children. The Oriental is as good a man as the Occidental; but between the two there is this great gulf fixed."

"I thought you just said that there were plenty of men who would be pleased to marry me," said Miriam, uttering a gloomy laugh.

"Oh, well," her temptress answered, "in a girl like you, the gulf becomes very narrow, and it would be easily jumped across when nobody was looking. You would pass for one of us anywhere."

"Mrs. Garrett," said Miriam, gravely, "I'm afraid I believe in the gulf more strongly than you do. Americans as well as English people are constantly coming out here to spend their winters, and they all see what an Egyptian is—a 'native,' a brown man from Africa. They probably never notice the white ones, or else they suppose they are not real Egyptians. They would all think of me as belonging to a race the whites mustn't intermarry with; and if I married an American or an Englishman I should ruin him socially. I used to think that only the point of view mattered; but I see now that the old saying about East being East and West being West is something it will take generations to break down, and I haven't the courage to start the battle. I shall probably retire from the scene in the end by way of the duck pond."

Mrs. Garrett made a gesture of impatience.

"Miriam, how can you talk like that? I insist on your coming away with me. We needn't consider the question of marriage at all. We'll just have a jolly time."

The girl shook her head. "My father would never let me go," she said. "He has spent thousands on my education, and now he wants to see a return in the nature of a marriage to some influential Egyptian. He is a patriot, and it would break his heart if I married out of Egypt."

"Well, but you can run away," she answered, "and leave a note saying you're not ready for marriage yet. That would be the thin end of the wedge, and later on things might settle themselves. You could climb out of that window one evening, and catch the night train to Cairo." She walked to the open window and glanced down. "Well," she added, "perhaps that would be rather perilous. Still, you could always find a way. Will you come?"

"Thank you awfully for asking me to, but I can't, I can't," Miriam sighed.

Mrs. Garrett looked from her to the window. "A girl of your age ought to be able to manage a little adventure like that," she said, smiling.

"Oh, it's not the adventure I'm worrying about," the girl laughed. "For that matter, there's a big sycamore tree on this other side which touches the window. Anybody could climb down it easily." She walked across to one of the windows overlooking the garden, the shutters of which were closed, and laid her hand upon the knob, in order to throw them open. "And this part of the place," she added, "is always deserted."

Saying this, she pushed the heavy shutters outwards. There was a thud and a curious scuffling

noise outside the window, which caused her to leap back, bumping into Mrs. Garrett as she did so. The shuttter swung towards the room again, and, as it did so, the two women beheld, to their amazement, the figure of a tall, thin man, clinging to the edge of the woodwork. He was dressed in grey flannels, a felt hat was squashed over his eyes, and he was covered with leaves and bits of twig. His face was pressed against the woodwork, his hands clutching the top of the shutter despairingly. His white tennis shoes scraped madly for foothold, and one leg plunged up and down in the manner of an automaton. When the shutter struck the framework of the window, he fell from it on to the window-sill, and rolled from thence to the floor, where he sat alternately wringing and sucking his bruised fingers.

"Captain Erskine!" exclaimed Mrs. Garrett and Miriam in one breath, holding one another round the waist for mutual support, and staring, stupefied, at the dusty figure seated recklessly upon the floor before them.

"My hat! It's Mrs. Garrett!" he groaned. "I didn't know *you* were here."

He snatched at a gaudy cloth which covered a table at his side, and pulled it towards him. A crash announced the fall and destruction of a vase which had stood upon the table. The expression of horror deepened on his face; and, with a rapid movement, he threw the cloth over his head, proceeding at once to sidle in a blind, crab-like manner towards the window. Mrs. Garrett slipped forward quickly and closed the shutters again, at the same time pulling the cloth from the intruder's head, thereby causing his hair to stand straight up on one side of his cranium, and to lie flat on the other.

"Will you be good enough, she enquired, "to explain what you were doing on that shutter?"

Charles Erskine retained his position upon the floor. "I shall be able to explain what I'm doing on another shutter," he mumbled, wth his fingers in his mouth, "when I'm carried out of this house with a knife in my heart."

"I trust you had no designs on the silver," said Miriam, trying to be calm.

"Kindly explain yourself," said Mrs. Garrett, in a more severe tone. "I think I have a right to know."

"No more right than I have to know what you are doing here, dear lady," he answered, speaking in a whisper, as he painfully clambered to his feet. "I think you will perhaps remember that you wrote to your brother-in-law the other day, saying you were in Cairo, and had no intention of leaving it."

"I changed my mind," snapped Mrs. Garrett. "Now, will you please tell us why you were eavesdropping outside that window?"

"I wish you'd tell me first," he said, "why you bang a shutter open suddenly like that. You ought to be more careful. You nearly hurled me to my death. . . . Do you know, I'm in most mortal funk. Is that door locked?"

"Yes," Miriam replied.

"We are waiting for your explanation," Mrs. Garrett whispered.

"Well, it was like this," said Captain Erskine, inventing rapidly. "I was walking along the streets of the town, humming a tune to myself . . . you know how one does. Isn't it curious how one hums tunes? Have you ever thought of it? I had a friend once . . ."

"Oh, don't be an idiot," Miriam exclaimed, picking some of the leaves off his coat. "Go on with your explantion."

"Well," he continued, "when I found myself under the walls of this house, I said to myself, 'Hullo,' I said . . ."

"How can you be so stupid?" Mrs. Garrett asked him. "What did you climb the tree to this window for?"

"I was just coming to that," he declared. "Well, I climbed the tree because I wanted to see who lived in this room. I've always had a longing to find out: it's a regular obsession."

"But why did you get on to the shutter?" asked Miriam.

"Oh, I can explain that easily," he said, brightening. "I had one foot on a branch of the tree and the other an the window-ledge; and then you suddenly banged the thing open and nearly sent me flying. I clutched the shutter to save myself from falling. . . . That's really true."

"The rest was lies, of course," Mrs. Garrett whispered.

"Yes," said Charles Erskine proudly, beaming upon them. "Rather a clever story to invent on the spur of the moment, wasn't it?"

"Rotten," said Miriam. "Did you climb the tree to see if you could catch a glimpse of me?"

"No: honest truth, upon my honor," he declared, with sincerity.

Miriam looked disappointed. "Well, what on earth did you do it for?"

"I was looking for somebody I'd mislaid."

"Captain Erskine," Mrs. Garrett whispered, "will you please explain yourself?"

"Well," he admitted at last, playing with his hat, "the fact is, I've lost your brother-in-law, and so I thought I'd better look in here."

"Why here?" asked Miriam, sternly.

"Oh," he said, in an offhand manner, "he was last seen on your roof."

Mrs. Garrett sank into a chair. "On the roof?" she cried. "Robert on the *roof?*"

"Well, said Miriam, indignantly, "that is carrying the privileges of friendship rather too far."

"Oh no," he laughed, "he only wants to have a little friendly chat with you, you know, and they wouldn't let him in by the front door."

"But if he were caught he'd be knifed or something," cried Miriam, drumming her fist against the palm of her other hand.

"That's precisely why I'm after him," said his friend, cheerfully, flourishing a revolver which he drew, with a wink, from his pocket. "If you'll excuse my saying so, he's such a blasted fool. It came to my ears—never mind how—that he was going to make this attempt to communicate with you, Miss Marcos, this morning, so I followed. But when I got here, the gardener, who is a friend of his, said he was already on the roof. So up I went, like a monkey, to try to reason with him or at any rate to lend him my revolver."

Mrs. Garrett rose to her feet again and turned to him in despair. "For goodness' sake let us find him." she wailed. "Oh, what is to be done?"

"Let's sit down and think it out," said Captain Erskine, leading the two women to their seats. "Of course, you must understand, Mrs. Garrett, that your brother-in-law has only been driven to this foolhardy adventure in sheer desperation. He has

tried every means of communicating with Miss Marcos, but without any success."

"I've had no message from him of any kind," Miriam declared. "I can't believe he really tried."

"Oh yes, he did indeed," Captain Erskine told her; "tried his best."

"And you mean to say you let him?" Mrs. Garrett asked with scorn. "Has he won you over?—or what?" She looked anxiously at the door as she spoke, and thither Miriam's eyes were also directed.

The trap-door in the ceiling slowly and noiselessly opened above their heads, and a grey felt hat descended like a shot bird into Charles Erskine's lap. He looked up quickly, but the trap had already closed once more. Neither of the two women had seen the arrival of the hat, and Captain Erskine did not for the moment think it wise to announce it.

Mrs. Garrett turned once more to him. "Well," she said, "what is to be done? . . . Why, bless me!—the man has got *two* hats."

Captain Erskine giggled feebly as they both stared in astonishment at him. "Oh, that's nothing," he declared. "You just look on that tree where I was."

Mrs. Garrett and Miriam hastened to the window, much perplexed. Charles Erskine took the opportunity to look up again at the roof; and, as he did so, the trap-door opened once more, and a jacket descended directly on to his head, veiling him completely from the astonished gaze of the two ladies who, finding nothing unusual upon the tree, had turned to resume their seats.

"My good man," Mrs. Garrett whispered, "what on earth are you doing now?"

Captain Erskine sat perfectly stiff and still for a

moment longer, the jacket over his head, his hands clutching the two hats. Miriam went over to him and shook him, pulling away the coat at the same time. He winked mysteriously at her.

"Is this a time for joking?" Mrs. Garrett cried.

"You don't seem to realize," he said, "that it's jolly clever of me to have produced an extra hat and coat suddenly from up my sleeve. You don't see conjuring like that every day. . . ."

"Oh, you old ass," said a voice from above his head. ". . . Or ventriloquizing," he added.

The trap-door shut with a bang, which caused the two women to start.

". . . Or spirit-rapping."

"Oh, the man's mad," Mrs. Garrett nearly sobbed.

"Now listen to me invoking the devil," he went on, rising to his feet and whistling a low call in the direction of the roof. The trap at once opened. "Come down, you fool," he hissed. "Softly does it."

Mrs. Garrett stared up. "It's Robert!" she exclaimed. "What are you doing up there, sir?"

"How do you do, Mary?" said Colonel Romance, looking through the open trap. "Good-morning, Miss Marcos."

"Come down, Douglas Fairbanks," said his friend. "Don't wait up there to be knifed."

"May I join the party?" asked the Colonel.

Charles Erskine fetched the ladder from the corner of the room and placed it against the trap. "Oh, you idiot!" he said. "Don't you know that lynch law is countenanced inside this sort of house?"

"What do you mean?" asked Miriam, sharply. "Is Colonel Romance in danger?"

"Oh, not more than you and I are," said Captain Erskine. "And perhaps Mrs. Garrett too. We are

all in awful danger, I can tell you. And even if we get out of this house with whole skins we shall probably all die, like the victims of the Borgia, of acute ptomaine poisoning."

Mrs. Garrett wrung her hands. "Come down at once, Robert," she whispered, "and for goodness' sake don't make so much noise."

In his shirt sleeves, Colonel Romance climbed down the ladder, smiling seraphically.

Chapter XV *The Scandal*

The arrival of Colonel Romance altered the tone of the proceedings, and caused a tension to be felt in the situation which previously had been eased by its dexterous handling. Miriam was the first to show this, for she stood back against the wall, glaring at the newcomer as though she were about to spring upon him and bite him in the neck. There was a flush upon her cheeks, and the rise and fall of her breast revealed the quickness of her breathing.

"I say!" exclaimed Colonel Romance, eyeing her nervously, "you do look angry!"

"Well, why do you come here spying on me?" she asked, passionately. "I don't want to see you." She turned from one to another. "Oh, won't you please all go away and leave me now? I can look after myself."

"No, you can't," Mrs. Garrett answered. "Robert, you and Captain Erskine have just arrived from midair in time to help me in a little plot I am hatching."

"No," said Miriam, hastily and with irritation. "It's no use discussing it. It cannot be. Do please go now."

"Oh, let me stay a moment," Colonel Romance implored, putting on his coat. "I've been trying my level best to see you for so long; but you've no idea of the difficulties."

"Oh yes, I have," Miriam replied, softening. "I see the fortifications from the inside. But that's no excuse for spying."

"Well, never mind about that now," said he. "Tell me, do you live in this room much?"

"Yes, most of the time," she answered. "Jolly, isn't it?"

Colonel Romance turned to Charles Erskine. "Your cook shall have a big tip," he declared.

"What for?" asked his friend, glaring at him.

"For bringing me correct information. He said Miss Marcos was here most of the time, though I myself only once caught a glimpse of her from the street. The shutters were always closed."

"Well, the sun comes in through that street-window after eleven o'clock," said Miriam. "The shutters are open till then. You ought to have come earlier."

"But I couldn't come till the Governor had gone to his office, and he doesn't leave the house till past ten."

"You seem to know all about our habits," she said, disdainfully.

"Oh, that's nothing," the Colonel laughed. "Yesterday you sat in the garden from three-thirty to five, and drank a mixture which you didn't like. You threw most of it away, when nobody was looking."

"Yes," said Miriam, shuddering. "It was sherbet, and it was given to me as a treat."

"At five-thirty you went for a drive. Do you want to hear any more of your doings for the last twenty-four hours?"

"I call it disgraceful," said Mrs. Garrett. "Did you know of this espionage, Captain Erskine?"

"No, I didn't," he replied, angrily. "I knew

nothing till this morning; and then I only found out because his native friends got scared and confessed the whole thing. That's why I'm here. However, it has only been going on for a few days. Robert seems to have amused himself by saving the life of one of these niggers—I beg your pardon, one of these fellows; and that gave him his chance. He has just been using their gratitude for his own sordid ends. I call it disgusting!"

"I'm surprised at you, Colonel Romance," said Miriam, smiling.

Mrs. Garrett sighed. "I've ceased to be surprised at anything," she said.

"Good," exclaimed her brother-in-law. "Then you won't die of heart failure when I tell you that I've made complete plans for the escape of the princess from the tower." He surveyed his companions loftily, prepared for the sensation which this statement would produce.

"It doesn't surprise me in the least," said Mrs. Garrett, calmly. "I've made similar plans myself."

At these words Colonel Romance rose to his feet. "My dear Mary, you take my breath away!"

"Oh, you won't find it so easy as you think," Charles Erskine told him. "The Governor of Ismuay is a personage of considerable power."

"And the trouble is that Miriam is fond of him," said Mrs. Garrett. "But listen to my scheme. I propose . . . Goodness, what is that?"

There was a loud knocking upon the door, and the voice of Girgis Pasha could be heard ordering them to open it. Instantly they sprang to their feet and stood staring at one another, until Captain Erskine broke the spell by running across to the window by which he had made his dramatic entrance,

to ascertain whether that way of escape was clear. He leant over the sill, but stepped back at once. "It's all up," he exclaimed; "there are about a dozen men outside."

Consternation was written upon the four faces as as they looked from the window to the door at which the knocking had recommenced.

Mrs. Garrett wrung her hands. "Oh, dear! oh, dear! she cried, "for goodness' sake, do *something!*"

"Come along, Charles," said his friend, going to the window. "We'd better face them and try to get away."

"Don't, don't," cried Miriam, interposing. "I'll hide you here."

The banging at the door continued, and now the handle was rattled savagely, and a chorus of voices, including those of the women, called on them to open.

"He's heard us, or seen us coming in," said Charles Erskine. "We *must* stay now."

"Open the door, open the door, I say," Girgis Pasha thundered, "or I will break the lock."

Mrs. Garrett suddenly rushed over to it. "Wait a minute," she called through the keyhole. "She is quite naked."

Shrieks of horror from the women outside greeted this statement, and Miriam, throwing up her hands, muttered, "With two men in the room!"

Colonel Romance forgot his agitation to stare blankly from Mrs. Garrett to Miriam. "What on earth are you talking about?" he asked, but no answer was forthcoming.

"You cannot escape," the Pasha's voice outside continued. "You are surrounded. Open the door."

"Better open it, I suppose," said Captain Er-

skine, desperately, and Colonel Romance nodded. He turned the key and threw the door wide. Through it Girgis Pasha sprang, with Mrs. Marcos, Mrs. Todros and Rosa at his heels. A crowd of servants blocked the passage behind them, all talking at the same time. The Governor glared round him like a bull introduced into the arena.

"What does this mean?" he shouted, beside himself with passion. "Don't try to touch me! I have ten men out there." His eye fell on Charles Erskine. "Oh, it's you, is it?" he muttered.

"What the deuce are you making all this fuss about?" said Captain Erskine, facing him defiantly. "Shut that door." Miriam found an opportunity to shut it.

Mrs. Todros beat her breast with her thin hands. "Oh, help! Allah!" she cried. "It is seduction and murder and adultery."

Mrs. Garrett appeared to be dancing with excitement, as she implored everybody to be quiet. "Oh, for goodness' sake, calm yourselves," she moaned, "and I'll explain everything."

"I need no explanation," cried the Governor. "I see it all now—plainly."

"Girgis Pasha, listen," said Charles Erskine, taking command. "Colonel Romance and I are here entirely by a mistake."

"They are here," piped Mrs. Todros, "to carry us all away for wives."

Colonel Romance stared at her. "Good God!" he exclaimed.

"Touch me as you dare!" cried Mrs. Marcos, feeling that her silence was unbecoming. The Colonel stared now in her direction. Suddenly Rosa uttered a loud wail, not unlike the cry of a jackal, and flung

herself down on the sofa. Miriam ran across to her and shook her by the shoulder.

"Rosa, stop that," she exclaimed. "You're not a puppy." Mrs. Todros thereupon began also to howl.

"Oh, listen to me, Mr. What's-your-name . . ." gasped Mrs. Garrett, seizing the Governor's arm.

"Can't you tell those women to hold their noise?" cried Captain Erskine. "Do you want a public scandal?"

"Scandal!" shouted Girgis Pasha. "The whole town knows it already. You shall pay for this!"

Colonel Romance turned despairingly to Miriam. "Who are these women?" he asked. "Keep them quiet, for Heaven's sake."

"They are my relations," said Miriam. "You see them at their best."

Girgis Pasha made a movement towards Miriam, but Charles Erskine intercepted him. "If you don't calm yourself and give me your attention, I'll punch your head—d'you hear? Colonel Romance and I heard Mrs. Garrett's voice, and we both climbed that tree for fun, to see what on earth she could be doing in your house. Then we got in through the window to surprise her."

"Ah, you bad man!" cried Mrs. Marcos. "Spying on a naked woman!"

"A naked woman!" said Colonel Romance. "What the devil do you mean?"

"Oh, she wasn't undressed then," Mrs. Garrett wailed, "really she wasn't."

"You told us she is naked this minute," Mrs. Marcos replied.

Colonel Romance looked at Charles, who stared back. "What *are* you all talking about?" he asked. "Who is naked?"

"I am," said Miriam.

"Then what on earth are you like when you are dressed?" the Colonel murmured, smiting his brow.

"Have you no such thing as a joke in this country?" asked Mrs. Garrett.

"It is no joke," the Pasha answered, "to invade women's apartments in this or any other country. Anyhow, you will find it easier to get in than to get out. You are all prisoners."

"Come, Mrs. Garrett," said Miriam, with forced calm. "Let me see you to your carriage."

"Hold your tongue," said Girgis Pasha, giving her a savage push, whereat Colonel Romance sprang at him like a little fighting cock.

"If you want trouble, do that again," he cried, clenching his fists. Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Todros together uttered a shriek.

Girgis Pasha looked down at him with a contemptuous expression on his handsome face. Then, without turning, he shouted to his retainers: "Ya Ibrahîm, Ahmed, Mustafa . . .!"

The two Englishmen dashed at him, and, pinioning him, struggled with him into the middle of the room, where, tripping over a chair, the three of them fell to the ground in a heap, while Miriam threw herself upon them, with the object of aiding her father, and pummelled his assailants with her fists.

"Leave my father alone, you beastly savages!" she cried, and the friends, abashed, released their hold, both they and the Governor rising to their feet as though their fury were for the moment spent. Then, suddenly, Miriam grasped Rosa by the arm and dragged her to the piano.

"Play something," she said. "Go on, play!"

Rosa fell in a heap upon the carpet, and was

dragged to her feet again by Miriam, who forced her on to the piano-stool. "Go on, play something," she repeated: "play this music that's in front of you."

The song "Keep the Home Fires Burning" happened to be open upon the stand, and, with Miriam's hands nipping her arm and the back of her neck, Rosa was at last forced to bang her fingers on the notes.

"You'd better sing, too," Miriam added. "Sing, I tell you."

Rosa's tears splashed upon the piano, as, after a further protest, she began in a piercing voice to sing the hackneyed words.

"Oh, Lord!" Colonel Romance groaned, looking around. "What's that for?"

"We don't want a scandal," she exclaimed. "Laugh or something. Make a noise. Pretend it's a party."

"Guard the door—quick!" said Captain Erskine to his friend, as a loud knocking was heard upon it. "I'll look after the Pasha."

The Colonel threw himself against it, calling, as he did so, to his sister-in-law to engage the women at the opposite side of the room.

"Laugh, Mary, laugh for God's sake!" he cried, bursting into a roar of badly feigned mirth, which was repeated by Charles Erskine. Miriam uttered a loud "Ha, ha, ha!"—at the same time prodding Rosa in the back, to urge her to more uproarious song. The Governor opened his mouth to shout once more for help; but at this Captain Erskine whipped out his revolver and pointed it at him. Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Todros uttered a simultaneous shriek, which

blended nicely with a high note of Rosa's song, in which Miriam had now joined.

Charles Erskine glared at the two Egyptian women. "If either of you scream again," he shouted, above the din, "I'll shoot you. Ha, ha, ha!" Then, turning again to the Pasha. "Tell them to go away, or you're a dead man. Go on."

The Governor looked contemptuously at the revolver. "If that thing went off and I were killed," he said, "you would be hanged; so be careful of it, and take your finger off the trigger. I am going to tell the servants to go away anyhow. There is no need for their aid: I think I ought to be able to manage two ruffians such as you myself."

He went towards the door, and called out loudly to his men, saying that he did not want them, and that they were to go downstairs to await orders. "It is only a drunken joke," he said, speaking in Arabic, and using words which he rightly supposed that Captain Erskine would not understand.

"What is he saying?" panted Mrs. Garrett.

"He has told them to go away," said Colonel Romance. "You can stop that music, now, Miss Marcos."

Miriam removed her hands from the back of Rosa's neck. The girl fell forward, and, her head on the keyboard, gave vent to her feelings in a series of pitiful sobs. Girgis Pasha folded his arms, and faced the revolver which covered him.

"No," said Charles Erskine, "kindly sit down, all of you. *Sit down*, I say."

Miriam found a chair near the piano, and sitting down upon it, gave Rosa a friendly pat upon the shoulders. Girgis Pasha with great dignity seated himself in an armchair which stood near the scene of

his late struggles, and calmly crossed his legs. Colonel Romance pulled a cushion from a sofa, and throwing it upon the floor in front of the door, sat upon it. Mrs. Garrett, seizing Mrs. Marcos with one hand and Mrs. Todros with the other, led them to another sofa, choosing for herself a small chair at their side. For a moment there was a breathless silence, which was broken by a spasmodic wail from Mrs. Todros.

Miriam turned upon her. "I'm afraid Captain Erskine will gag you or do something sensational like that," she said, "if you don't keep quiet."

Colonel Romance nodded meaningly. "Hadn't we better laugh?" he suggested. "Mary, you start."

"Ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed Mrs. Garrett, in so forced a manner that both Miriam and the two Englishmen were able to join in with sounds more suggestive of genuine amusement.

"Thank you," said Captain Erskine, handling his revolver. "That's very nice."

"Now, Mary," said Colonel Romance, directing the situation from his lowly seat in front of the door; "it's your turn first. Tell us what you are doing here."

"I came out from Luxor to see Miriam," she said, addressing Girgis Pasha, who was engaged in adjusting his eyeglass. "I will be quite frank. I had an idea that my brother-in-law, Colonel Romance, was rather . . . er . . . attracted to your daughter, and as I am devoted to his interests" (she looked meaningly at him), "I wanted to satisfy myself that he was not doing anything rash. I am also very fond of Miriam, and this morning I have been telling her candidly that nothing but unhappiness would result from any affair of that kind."

Colonel Romance looked at her coldly. "I'm afraid you have been rather a busybody, Mary," he said. "Now then, Charles, what are you doing here? Let us all be frank."

"I followed you, you idiot," Captain Erskine replied, uttering a disdainful laugh. "I didn't want to see you make a fool of yourself either; and I brought this revolver for the exact purpose I'm using it for now—to get you safely out of a scrape you ought never to have got yourself into."

Colonel Romance brushed his words aside with a gesture. "As for me," he said, turning to the Gov-

ernor, "I climbed into this room very largely to get the laugh of you. You were quite willing for me to dine with you and your daughter in London, and I very much resented your refusal to let me see her here. So I thought I'd score you off by paying my respects through that trap-door. I promised your daughter my friendship, and I'd be hanged if I'd let you give her the impression that I'd gone back on my word. I take it that you have held up my letters. That sort of thing isn't done, and I wasn't going to let you get away with it. Miss Marcos knows now, at any rate, that I've been doing my best to see her. . . . That's frank enough; now it is your turn. What are you making all this ridiculous fuss about?"

The Governor began to rise to his feet, but sat down again with resignation as Captain Erskine covered him with his revolver once more. "I am making a fuss," he said, "because I do not care to have my house invaded by two lunatics. Since you are being so frank, I will also speak my mind. There was a time, before the war, when I respected British officers; but I have no opinion of them now, especially not in regard to their treatment of women."

"You have the least possible foundation for that remark," said Colonel Romance, angrily.

The Pasha shrugged his shoulders. "Then, again, Captain Erskine's attitude to Egyptians is insolent in the extreme. He has the brain of a Boy Scout: look at him now, handling that revolver as though he thought himself the hero of a penny novelette. As for you, Colonel Romance, I know nothing of you, except that you seem to think you are Romeo."

His biting words produced a momentary silence, which, however, was presently broken by Mrs. Gar-

rett. "Listen to me for a moment," she said to the Pasha. She seemed anxious to rise to her feet, but was restrained by the finger of her brother-in-law, which was pointed sternly at her chair. "I came here partly to ask you whether you would allow Miriam to come away with me. I want to introduce her into London society."

"Well, I'm blessed!" exclaimed Captain Erskine.

"I was talking to her about it," she went on, "when these two naughty boys climbed in. Will you let her come with me now?"

Girgis Pasha looked at her coldly through his eyeglass. "Certainly not," he replied. "And please do not think that this affair can be terminated by an obvious strategy like that. Remember, you are prisoners; it is simply a question whether I shall hand you over to your consul or to the common police."

"Remember, this thing is loaded," Charles Erskine growled, tapping his revolver.

The Pasha spread his hands, as though he were asking what could be done with such a fool. "I have no wish," he declared," for my daughter to see any more of English life. Already she has learnt a great deal too much about it. I suppose I am right in thinking that Colonel Romance has received some encouragement from her; and it seems to me that the only thing to do is to arrange for her marriage to one of her own countrymen as quickly as possible."

At this Miriam clenched her hands. "Look here, Father," she said, speaking slowly but sharply, "I want you to understand that I will never consent to be married off to anybody I have not myself chosen."

"You will do as I tell you," he replied.

"I shall do no such thing," she declared, warmly.

"Then you will be lucky if you escape a good whipping for your part in this business," he told her, his anger rising again.

"Oh, if you dare . . .!" said Colonel Romance, in a tone which it was not pleasant to hear.

"She is a bad girl," exclaimed Mrs. Marcos, suddenly waking out of a sort of stupor. "If His Excellency will not whip her, I will make it myself."

"Well," said Mrs. Garrett, "it is clear that she can't be left here after that." She turned to the Pasha. "I think you have treated Miriam very unwisely, if I may say so. You have given her an English education, and now that she has learnt to love English freedom you shut her up in this house like a prisoner."

"I had my reasons for shutting her up," he replied. "Colonel Romance will understand those reasons."

Colonel Romance winced, as it were. "What do you mean?" he asked, knowing quite well.

"I mean that your coming to Ismuay had too obvious a purpose to be overlooked," he replied. "We Egyptians no longer trust the honor of British officers now that we have got to know them so thoroughly during the war. You turned our country into one of your military bases; you let your troops loose upon us; and frankly, we no longer think much of you. In the old days English officers and civilians out here were few in number; they were picked men and were under the strictest control from the Residency. But during the war you came in your thousands, you and your Colonials; and our belief in English gentlemen was shattered, or, rather, we realized for the first time that the term 'gentleman' applied only to your picked men, not to your officers

as a whole. Can you wonder then that I took steps to protect my daughter when you pursued her so very obviously all the way to Ismuay? I had little means of knowing whether you belonged to the picked men or to the others; and to-day, I am sorry to say, I have found out that you belong to the latter category."

Charles Erskine became red in the face with anger. "You'd better be careful what you are saying," he muttered, "or you'll get your teeth knocked down your throat."

Colonel Romance shook his head at his friend. "Steady, Charles!" he said. "Don't lose your temper."

"There is no need to be disgusting, Captain Erskine," Miriam remarked, bitingly.

She was about to speak further when suddenly Mrs. Marcos started to her feet and waved her arms, as though she had lost her reason. "Yeh, yeh, yeh! Oi, yeh!" she screamed, tearing her hair, and glaring at the company with her one eye, like a fat and demonical old prophetess of Baal. "What for we listen? Kill, Girgis, kill! English devils! Damn you English devils!—traitors, full of deceit and lies and oppression! Oh, but this time a story of your shame shall be spoken, and . . . and . . . *written* in the print! Oi, yeh! Everybody in the world shall know how you are cheaters and break into ladies' room for the bad reason. Pigs! Pigs! Kill them, Girgis! It is the blood that will make the apology." She broke into Arabic, and poured imprecations from her painted lips, until, as suddenly as she had risen, she fell back again upon the sofa, rocking herself too and fro, while Mrs. Todros bent over her, soothing her.

"Good Lord!" muttered Colonel Romance, sick with horror at this exhibition of uncontrol.

Miriam turned to him. "You see," she said very quietly, "the sort of thing that's in my blood. Please go, now, and leave me."

"No!" he cried with vehemence, "you must get out of this somehow. It's not fit for you."

"The woman is hysterical," said the Pasha.

"Please go," Miriam repeated. "I am ashamed."

Her misery wrung Colonel Romance's heart: she must be taken away from these surroundings. It was unthinkable that she should be left amongst such women. "Look here!" he exclaimed, going over to the Pasha. "I'm not what you think I am. I'm not playing the fool. I want to marry your daughter, d'you hear? I want to marry her."

Mrs. Garrett sprang to her feet. "Robert!" she cried, seizing his arm. "You're mad; or else you are sacrificing yourself for us."

"Sacrificing myself!" he answered in a voice of scorn. "Miriam, you at any rate know that I love you. Will you marry me?"

"How can I?" she asked him. "After this exhibition, how can I? There is that impassable gulf between us."

The Pasha drew himself up haughtily. "Colonel Romance," he said, "please understand that my daughter shall marry an Egyptian or nobody. I shall ararnge a marriage for her at once. That is quite final; so kindly do not mention the subject again."

"I will do as I choose, Father," the girl declared.

"You shall do as I wish," he replied, menacingly.

She turned to Mrs. Garrett. "What did I say about the duck pond?" she whispered.

"Miriam, you have got to marry me," Colonel Romance insisted. "Will you?" He seized her hand.

"Oh, I can't drag you down," she moaned, taking her hand from his. "Leave me. Get out of this house somehow. Let me look after myself."

"You are not going to be left," Mrs. Garrett said, with determination. "I don't want you to marry my brother-in-law, but I'm not going to see you left here."

The Pasha clenched his fist. "She shall marry whom I choose; and I shall choose quickly. She shall obey me."

"No, she won't," said Colonel Romance, shortly.

"I tell you she will," the Pasha answered.

Captain Erskine and Colonel Romance menaced him at the same moment.

"Now, listen to me," said the Colonel.

"Look here, we've had enough of this," said Charles Erskine.

Girgis Pasha cut them short. "I shall call the servants," he said. "I really cannot stand your rudeness."

"No, he will not stand them," piped Mrs. Todros, her arm around the moaning Mrs. Marcos.

"If you shoot me," said the Governor, moving towards the door in defiance of Captain Erskine's revolver, "you will be hanged, and your country will be utterly disgraced."

Miriam put her hand on Charles Erskine's arm, and, with a sudden movement, snatched the revolver from him. He made an angry gesture, as she stepped back from him towards the window, and stood there as though at bay.

"What on earth are you doing?" he asked.

"Bringing things to a conclusion," she said.

"This is final now. We can't continue this party indefinitely."

Colonel Romance, perplexed, crossed the room to come to her.

"Stand back, all of you," she exclaimed, so sharply that a surprised silence fell upon all those who were present. "I am going to do one of two things: Either I am going to be given my absolute freedom, or I am going to shoot myself. Choose, Father." She pointed a finger at Girgis Pasha, who stared at her open-mouthed, as, indeed, did everyone in the room.

Mrs. Marcos, sitting up once more, gave utterance to a loud wail. "Miriam," she cried, "put the gun away. You have the madness."

"What are you doing?" asked the Pasha, in bewilderment. "You absurd girl! Oh, you need to be taught! . . ."

"Choose," said Miriam, firmly. "I will give you one minute to make up your mind. Which is to be—my freedom or my death? I swear to God I'll shoot myself if any one of you comes near me now."

"Miriam, Miriam!" cried Mrs. Garrett, running forward. The girl instantly raised the revolver to her head, whereupon her friend stopped short.

"Keep away," said Colonel Romance. "Don't you see she's in earnest?"

The color had quite left Miriam's face, as she stood facing the agitated Governor and her disconcerted friends.

"Miriam, for God's sake . . .!" Colonel Romance cried.

She looked at him with infinite tenderness in her eyes, and for a moment her resolution seemed to

waver and fail. "No," she whispered, after a pause, pulling herself together.

"Miss Marcos," said Charles Erskine, "this it not fair on us. Give me back that weapon. We'll see you through all right."

"No," she answered. "My mind is quite made up. Be quick, Father. Choose."

"Choose!" cried Girgis Pasha, anger and perplexity mingling in the tone of his voice and in his attitude. "My good girl, you're mad!"

"The time is up almost," said Miriam, quite calmly, as she deliberately placed the muzzle of the revolver against her temple.

The Pasha shrugged his shoulders. "Blow your foolish brains out, if you like," he told her. "I am certainly not going to give you your freedom."

"Good-bye, all of you," said Miriam, speaking very slowly. "Robert Romance, I love you with my whole heart and soul. Good-bye."

The two native women struggled to their feet and rushed across to the Governor, screaming at him in Arabic. Mrs. Garrett, with a piteous cry, flung herself on her knees before Miriam, and sank to the ground, her fingers crammed into her ears. Colonel Romance seemed to have lost the power of action: he stood staring at the beautiful, white face of the girl, as though unable to take his eyes from her.

"Oh, wait, wait . . ." cried Charles Erskine. "Miss Marcos! . . ."

"No, now," said she shortly, drawing in her breath, and clutching the window-sill with her left hand. Girgis Pasha saw the ominous tightening of the muscles, and knew, to his amazement, that the moment had come.

"Stop!" he cried, waving a distracted hand. "I

will do as you wish, Miriam. I don't understand you. . . ."

For a moment Miriam stood with the revolver raised. Then, slowly, she lowered the weapon.

"You promise?" she asked. "Say exactly what you promise."

"I promise that after to-day I will not attempt to restrict your actions," said the Governor. "This is horrible . . ." He drew his hand across his forehead.

The revolver dropped from the girl's fingers and fell with a loud noise upon the floor. Mrs. Garrett crawled over to it on her hands and knees, and placed it on the table. Miriam smiled feebly, and, suddenly swaying forward, was caught by Colonel Romance and Captain Erskine, who led her to a chair.

Girgis Pasha, seeing the revolver lying where Mrs. Garrett had placed it, instantly seized it and slipped it into his pocket. Then facing the two Englishmen, he moved back towards the door. "Well, now," he said, "I think we may regard this meeting as concluded. There is no need to prolong the situation which must be painful to all of us."

He unlocked the door, and, opening it wide, called out to his servants, who came running up the stairs—half a dozen of them, accompanied by two uniformed policemen carrying service rifles.

"Oh, damnation!" said Charles Erskine, as the men clustered behind the Governor.

"Now you will please leave my house," the Pasha said, addressing himself to Colonel Romance and Captain Erskine. "You may consider yourselves lucky that I do not have you arrested." He drew the revolver from his pocket and handed it to its owner. "Here, take this weapon. I am sure you

would be quite lost without it—you and your kind. But take my advice, and try not to flourish it about. . . . Mrs. Garrett, I am extremely ashamed of what has happened, and you must excuse me if I am a little abrupt in bringing the scene to an end. This policeman here will see you to the station."

He gave the necessary orders to the man, and bowed as Mrs. Garrett walked stiffly out of the room and down the stairs. Colonel Romance was about to speak to Miriam, when, at another order from the Pasha, both he and Captain Erskine were hustled through the door, ringed around by the armed natives, their dispirited and useless attempts at resistance being quickly quelled. It was, perforce, a very tame exit.

THE Egyptians are, on the whole, a docile, orderly race; and the agitated Mrs. Garrett and the two anxious Englishmen were not molested as they walked to the railway station. The townspeople of Ismuay are accustomed to tourists, and the sight of these foreigners with a policeman sauntering along behind them in the noonday sun attracted little attention. Captain Erskine had suggested that Mrs. Garrett should come back to his house to have luncheon and a rest; but as there was a train for Luxor due in less than half an hour, she insisted on returning by it, declaring that she could not eat, and would not feel inclined to rest until she was back once more amongst the friendly throng at the Luxor Winter Palace. Colonel Romance thereupon decided to accompany her, and to come back on the following day; for he speedily realized that absolutely nothing was to be gained by remaining just now in Ismuay.

"I've got to think out a way of helping Miriam," he said, trying to speak judiciously and calmly, when all the while the thing that really mattered was the fact that she had said she loved him. "My one consolation is that her father is really quite a decent fellow, and I'm sure he won't treat her badly. He'll probably try to arrange a marriage for her during the next few weeks, and meanwhile, I suppose, he'll take her down to Cairo, so as to make a pretence, at

any rate, of fulfilling his promise to give her more freedom."

"Well, and what do you intend to do?" Mrs. Garrett asked. They were standing now upon the station platform, waiting for the train.

"I don't know," he answered. "I shall come back here to-morrow, and try to find out their movements from my native friends, and then I'll just wait my opportunity and smuggle her out of the country, or make a dash by aeroplane or something."

"Oh, you child!" his sister-in-law exclaimed. "I believe it is just the adventure of the whole thing that appeals to you. I don't think you are really in love at all."

"I am, indeed," he replied with fervor. "These weeks at Ismuay have been a nightmare. I haven't been able to eat. I've felt all the time as though I'd swallowed my bedclothes and wanted to drink my bath to wash them down. That's love, isn't it? My heart felt as though it were at a funeral on a rainy November day in Manchester. Isn't that love? I felt that life was as empty as a house that can't be let because it's haunted, and as useless as a dead cat in a dustbin. Isn't that love?"

"I suppose it must be," she said, shaking her head. "Poor Miriam! Poor girl, I do hope it didn't take her in the same way!"

The journey to Luxor was accomplished more or less in silence, and soon Colonel Romance was pacing the terrace of the Winter Palace, gazing at the oily Nile and the fields and distant hills on the far side, while Mrs. Garrett was sleeping, or trying to sleep, in her bedroom. The afternoon was hot and oppressive, and a haze of cloud veiled the sunlight; but he himself had no desire for sleep. He was in an exalted,

dithyrambic mood; and there was a sort of bombast in his thoughts which rendered him incapable of realizing the terrors of the situation. Miriam had said she loved him, and by that one declaration she had dispelled all gloom from his mind. He had the conviction that somehow he would be able to lift her out of her present difficulties, and carry her away across the sea to that golden region of pure bliss which, in the lover's geography, is the harbor of every argosy. The wild events of the morning had left on his mind the impression that Miriam was in no immediate danger, and he believed that her father would make good his promise to her.

As he walked to and fro upon the sultry terrace his attention was attracted by two men who came out from the hotel and stood conversing for a while before the door. The one—a tall, burly figure—was a young Egyptian, judging by the red tarboush upon his head and his slightly brownish skin, though his clothes and his general deportment were those of an Englishman, and he wore as a tie the colors of a well-known English sporting club. The other was a lean and sallow Anglican Archdeacon, whose acquaintance Colonel Romance had made on the P. and O. liner which had brought them both to Egypt a few weeks ago: he looked like Dante and talked like Beatrice.

The Egyptian was evidently in a hurry to be gone, and presently, shaking hands with his friend, he ran down the steps of the terrace and drove away in the hotel omnibus which had been awaiting him. The Archdeacon then came over to Colonel Romance, and, having greeted him and exchanged a word or two with him in regard to their respective activities, asked him whether he felt inclined for a game of tennis.

"I was going to play a couple of sets with that charming young Egyptian you saw me talking to," he explained in his high, womanish voice, "but he has been called away suddenly, and I and my sluggish liver have been left disconsolate."

Colonel Romance, having no change of clothes with him, declined the invitation to play, although he was quite in the mood to knock the balls about; and soon he and the cleric had settled themselves in two deck-chairs, the former smoking his pipe, mainly to discourage the flies, and the latter slowly waving a fly-whisk to and fro before his face.

"You know," said the Archdeacon presently, "these Egyptians are very decent fellows. The man I was with just now is really quite companionable, quite. He was up at Oxford; and in manner, at any rate, he is a patrician. He is one of these wealthy Copts, you know; has a great mansion in Cairo, I believe; and owns a vast area of land here in Upper Egypt. Somebody was telling me that he is most gentlemanly in his home life: keeps a fox-terrier, and sings in his bath in the morning, and all that sort of thing. He plays a spiffing game of tennis, too."

"What's his name?" the Colonel asked.

"Boutros Bey Andraos. 'Bey' is a title, you know."

"Married?"

"No. That is why he had to hurry off to-day. He said he had to go down by the afternoon train to Ismuay to see his future father-in-law, and arrange matters. He seemed very melancholy about it, poor fellow. He said he didn't want to enter the state of matrimony at all, but that it was a sort of political move he couldn't get out of."

At the mention of Ismuay the thought flashed

through Colonel Romance's mind that the young man might have been sent for by Girgis Pasha, and that Miriam was the prospective bride. This was, in fact, the case; but there is nothing so unbelievable as the truth, and he quickly dismissed the thought as improbable.

"English influence," the Archdeacon continued, "has really done a wonderful lot for the Egyptians. I am sure our work out here has been under God's blessing. It seems such a shame that we have to evacuate the country."

"Yes, it does," Colonel Romance replied, "but we have got to make good our word. We have always promised the Egyptians that we would go, and, after all, it's far more important to keep our promises than to annex territory. 'The word of an Englishman' is proverbial in the East; and that belief that we always honor our word is more important to us, politically, than anything else. You know, one of the most honorable things ever done by a great Power to a little nation was done by us when we gave Egypt her independence after the war. Until the war Egypt was a province of Turkey, occupied by us, with the consent of the Porte, in order to safeguard European interests there and to keep the peace on behalf of the Ottoman Sultan; and when we defeated the Turks we could very well have annexed Egypt as part of our loot; but we didn't. We gave her her independence. It was a very fine gesture."

"Quite, quite!—but they hardly seem grateful for it, do they?" said the Archdeacon. "Oh, dash these flies!"

"I don't think we want gratitude," Colonel Romance answered. "The whole fun of the thing is

in the giving. Look at all these English fellows out here who have given the best years of their lives to running this country: they have enjoyed the work thoroughly. It's tremendous fun bringing justice and prosperity to a whole people, fathering them, and watching over them like shepherds over a flock of sheep. And now that they've got to pack up and go home, their great consolation should be that they are doing what only gentlemen could do—quietly clearing out without complaint, and without expecting or getting a word of thanks. Egypt is often called the Gateway of the East, and I think it will always stand to our credit and glory that we, who have so many interests in the East, have rebuilt it and handed it back to the Egyptians."

"There is a quotation from the Bible which just fits the case," the other remarked. "It is in the Book of Ezekiel, I think: 'And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the East. . . . The glory of God came by the way of the East,' or something like that."

"By the way of the East." Colonel Romance repeated the words to himself with deep and almost mystical interest: they had a wonderful significance when applied to his own case. The glory had certainly come into his life by the way of the East.

"A wonderful old race, the Egyptians!" the Archdeacon declared. "It is odd how one never thinks of them in ancient times as being Oriental people: they always seem to have been so Western. It was from them that Europe obtained its civilization. They were the first people, I am told, who sat upright upon chairs instead of squatting on stools or on the ground, or reclining on sofas: that is a very signifi-

cant fact. And then, again, they were the only people in the ancient world who gave women equal rights with men, and . . . really, these flies are intolerable! I'm afraid I shall have to go in."

"It means that a sandstorm is getting up, so I'm told," said the Colonel. "They always come into shelter near a building when the wind blows the dust about."

The Archdeacon wielded his fly-whisk vigorously, as he rose from his chair. "We must continue our talk later," he said. "I think I shall go to my room."

Colonel Romance also rose to his feet, and, on the hasty departure of his companion, strolled over to the steps which descended to the roadway along the river front, and, going down them, walked idly towards the ruins of the great Temple of Luxor at the far end of the litle row of shops facing the Nile. The wind was rising, and was blowing, not, as is usual, from the north, but from the south, bringing with it the sand of the African deserts and the dust of the upper Nile valley, routed out from all those sheltered little nooks and crevices into which the fine grains had daily been swept by the prevalent north wind. The atmosphere was heavy with this gritty powder, and the surface of the wide river, so smooth a short time ago, was already beginning to be whipped into dancing waves.

Colonel Romance was too restless to seek yet the sanctuary of the hotel, but he was glad enough when presently he passed into the semi-shelter of the great courtyard of the temple, shut in on all sides by ruined walls and rows of stout columns. Here, pipe in mouth, he seated himself upon a fallen architrave; and, in the comparative calm of this protected

area, he listened to the increasing hiss and moan of the storm outside. There is electricity in the south wind; and soon a nervous sense of anxiety, like a beating pulse, drummed itself into his mind, dispelling his former mood of triumphant exultation.

Gusts of sand were volleyed at the sheltering rows of columns; and when, presently, he rose to his feet once more, and went in amongst this forest of stone, he was greeted with a stinging shower of fine grains, flung at him from the open spaces beyond, while the wind rushed through his hair. The setting sun showed itself but occasionally and dimly behind the haze of sand and the sultry clouds above; and as he turned back again into the clearer and quieter air of the courtyard, he noticed how the sparrows, like the flies, had gathered here for refuge, not daring to face the rough usage of the tempest.

The sudden storm was full of voices to him: it was as though the ten thousand spirits of Egypt's forgotten years, in clamorous array, were bustling to enter the temple and to overwhelm him. Now came the thunder of hoofs, and the crunch of chariot-wheels, as the memory of some long-lost agitation went moaning on its way. Now it was as though the old gods of this ancient land were hurrying forward: Amon-Ra, with his tall feathers blown awry; Bes beating his tambourine; Hathor, the cow, lowing to her calves; the hawk Horus uttering his harsh notes; Anubis, the jackal, barking and howling; and Min piping the song of dead lovers.

Now the wind began to break its way into the courtyard and to send the dust spinning upwards; or perhaps it was the invading host that had penetrated into the temple. There were whisperings everywhere; and Colonel Romance, standing in the

loneliness and aloofness of the open space amidst the ruins, felt as though he were trapped and hemmed in by ghostly and unseen figures whose sudden forward movements sent the air in little puffs and swishes against his face. Yet they were not hostile: they seemed rather to be riotously curious, hustling to get a good view of him—a good view of this foreigner who dared to love one of Egypt's daughters.

Or perhaps . . . His heart began to beat. Yes, that was it: they were warning him, telling him of some impending danger. To Miriam? To himself? He could not say. He knew only that the ghosts of the past were in the storm, the ghosts and Pharaohs, goddesses and queens; and that they saw something which he could not see, and were bidding him beware.

He walked quickly across the courtyard, making his way to the entrance-gates of the ruins, his heart full of anxiety. What was he doing at Luxor, he asked himself, when Miriam might be in need of his help? Yet at Ismuay there was nothing to be done: he could not raise a finger to aid her. He must be patient; but even as he said this to himself he came out on to the river front once more, and was assailed by the full force of the impatient wind, which seemed to be storming at him and crying to him to take action.

He bent his head; and, walking close to the shops which faced the Nile, he made his way back to the hotel, his eyes now smarting and full of dust. The palm-trees were creaking and swaying, and the loose sail of a Nile vessel moored to the shore was flapping violently as some disheveled sailors attempted to bind it with ropes to the mast.

From this wild commotion he passed of a sudden into the quiet of the hall of the hotel, exchanging on

the instant the turbulence of the Orient for the calm of the Occident. He went up the soft, carpeted stairs to his room, and having washed the dust from his face and eyes, descended again, and found himself an easy-chair in the reading-room. Here, with last week's *Punch* in his hands, a pipe in his mouth, and a whiskey-and-soda by his side, his agitation presently left him, and he was able to laugh at his fears.

A native waiter who came, after a while, to remove his empty glass, found him dozing in his chair in the twilight. "Dar is one varry bad *khamseen* outside, sar," the man remarked. "De wind him blowin' like bloody Hell."

Colonel Romance smiled drowsily. "I perceive that you have learnt our language from an English gentleman," he said.

CHAPTER XVIII *Trapped*

The commotion in the Governor's house at Ismuay did not subside for many hours, for the hostility of Miriam's female relations towards herself was at first truly ebullient and afterwards still remained very near boiling point. Girgis Pasha, on the other hand, was calm and cool—so calm and cool, in fact, that it was evident his mind was made up. His behavior, indeed, was uncanny.

Miriam spoke to him when the opportunity presented itself. "You promised me my freedom," she said, confronting him; and when he had acknowledged the correctness of the statement by an inclination of his head, she added: "Very well, I want to go for a walk."

He looked coolly at her. "I promised you," he replied, "that after to-day I would not restrain you; but I suppose I may still appeal to your better nature. I am not quite sure yet what is going to be done, but I fancy you will find yourself in Cairo to-morrow or the next day. My promise, however, was to be operative 'after to-day,' wasn't it? In other words, to-day, while you are still here in Ismuay, you will kindly submit graciously to the restrictions which the old-fashioned ideas of a provincial town impose upon you. After the painful scenes this morning I would suggest that you keep to your room this afternoon."

"Why? Are you afraid of my meeting Colonel Romance?" she asked.

"No," he answered. "Colonel Romance has gone to Luxor, and my informant tells me he said he would not return until to-morrow. But after all your excitement you ought to keep quiet; and anyway, since what happened this morning is now common knowledge, your appearance would cause much comment and perhaps even hostility. Take my advice, and hide yourself to-day. In fact, I suppose, for the sake of my reputation, I ought to lock you in your room: at least, that is what is expected of me, I am sure." The ghost of a smile, disdainful, whimsical, showed itself upon his lips.

"Lock me in, by all means, if you like," she replied. "If there's only to be a few hours more of this awful house I'll stand anything. When are we going to Cairo exactly?"

"It may be by the morning train to-morrow; it may be by the evening train. I don't know yet."

"And then what?"

"Then, so far as I am concerned, I will not attempt to regulate your life. That is the promise you wrung from me—very unfairly, as I think."

"Do you mean that you will let me see Colonel Romance, the man you now know I love?"

"If you can reconcile it with your duty as the daughter of an Egyptian Minister who is striving to liberate his country from British control, I will not personally oppose you in your infatuation for this British officer. You know how I detest the thought of your giving your heart to anybody but an Egyptian; yet I have promised and—mark what I am saying—I have decided to take all the necessary

steps to make it possible for me to fulfill that promise to the letter."

"Thank you," she said.

He turned away. "Reserve your thanks for a later date," he answered bitterly. "Time will show whether you will have anything to thank me for. . . . Now please go to your room and stay there. Yes, perhaps it will be best if I lock you in." Again that ghost of a smile. "However, as that will be, I suppose, my last assertion of authority over you, since I must keep my promise by you, perhaps you will not object."

Miriam was willing enough to accommodate him in this respect: it seemed to her to be a rather feeble attempt on his part to save his face, and to show the women and the servants of the household that he was master; but it had its advantages. The less she saw of her female relations the better.

This was at mid-afternoon. Soon after she had gone to her room, her father returned to her, himself bringing her some tea. "Now I am going to lock the door," he said, as he went out.

"Very well," she answered scornfully. "Anything to oblige."

She heard him turn the key in the lock. Her little room faced the north and overlooked a narrow lane which passed along the back of the house. A water-pipe running down the wall near by suggested a possible means of escape; but the promise of the morrow checked any desire to run away, and a policeman, standing guard beneath the window, showed that here also her father had taken steps to save his face. She therefore sat down upon one of the only two chairs in the room, and had her tea with as much calmness as she could command.

The sun presently set, and in the twilight the call to prayer from the minaret of a neighboring mosque drifted to her ears, vibrating upon the rising wind like the wailing echo from a far-off and primitive age. As the light began to fade Miriam lit the lamp, but the wick had to be turned low, for the reason that, being badly trimmed, it smoked when turned higher. A sickly smell of oil thereafter pervaded the atmosphere; but the cold night air and the increasing force of the wind made it necessary to keep the window shut. Moreover, there rose from the lane an intolerable odor, due to its unchecked use as a public convenience.

A large gilt-framed mirror hung upon one of the walls of the room, and in its faulty glass she saw herself so caricatured and mimicked as she sat that she was presently constrained to get up from her chair to avoid its cheap mockery. The podgy bed, covered by a heavy quilted counterpane of pink cotton, and having upon it two stiff pillows covered with a material of the same color, did not invite her with any degree of insistence, but nevertheless she climbed upon it, and lay staring at the dirty ceiling above her, her hands tightly clenched, her legs drawn up. She was still wearing the thin white dress in which she had received Mrs. Garrett in the morning; and every now and then she shivered convulsively, partly owing to the cold, and partly to that ague which is born of misery. Through the shut window the noises of the town ascended, muffled, to her ears, but above the murmuring housetops she could contemplate the silent serenity of the stars, and there was something in their pale, calm light which quieted her nerves and gave her the opportunity of collecting her thoughts.

There was, of course, no doubt in her mind that her father intended to marry her off as soon as possible, perhaps, to Boutros Bey Andraos, in spite of his promise, but the ceremony in Cairo, she felt sure, could not be hurried through before the lapse of many days or even weeks; and therefore she had at least that period in which to decide upon a course of action. Vaguely it was her idea to communicate somehow with Colonel Romance, who would doubtless come to Cairo; and she pictured to herself a dramatic dash to Alexandria and a journey across the sea to America or Australia, or any other place which seemed a likely refuge. There she would wait for the coming of her lover.

But, if she were to fail, if a marriage were to be forced upon her in Cairo, she was quite resolved to make away with herself. She did not fear the act of dying. She had that very morning anticipated it as a happy release from her dreadful predicament. She did not fear dying; but Death she did fear. The terror which it held for her was that of eternal separation from her lover. She did not dare to hope that in the land of the shadows she would find him when the hour came for him to follow her. She would lose sight of him in the misty places of the dead, or he, perhaps, would have forgotten her in the stress of long life, and would meet her again as a stranger. Their love was so young, so undeveloped.

Thus she lay in painful thought for a considerable time. Occasionally she rose from the bed and looked out on to the lane, but always the policeman remained at his post below her, lit by a flickering lamp. At length she decided to take up her position more permanently at the window, in case any attempt should be made to communicate with her. She had

hardly drawn up her chair, however, when the thought occurred to her that she ought to meet whatever fate was in store for her in a becoming manner; and thereat she poured a jugful of water into the tin basin, and washed her face and hands, after which she took down her abundant hair, combed it carefully, and coiled it once more upon her head. She felt that unless she continued to do something she would become hysterical with the uncertainty of her situation; and therefore she now occupied herself for some time in trimming her finger-nails, and, later, in sewing up a small rent in her petticoat.

After a while she rose to her feet once more, and began to pace the room, to and fro, to and fro. . . .

It must have been past eight o'clock when she heard footsteps approaching the door. She paused in the middle of the room, her fists clenched.

"Who is there?" she called out.

"May we come in?" said the voice of Mrs. Marcos, as she unlocked the door and stood hesitating upon the threshold, Mrs. Todros peering over her shoulder.

"I can't prevent you," Miriam replied, shortly.

Mrs. Todros closed the door behind them, and seated herself upon one of the chairs, while Mrs. Marcos appropriated the other.

Miriam stood with her back to the window, watching them narrowly. "Well, what do you want?" she asked at length.

"We have come to tell you good news," said Mrs. Marcos, looking furtively with her one eye at Miriam. "You have been very bad and caused your father much troubles, but he is a good man, and he forgive you. He has arranged a splendid marriage for you, and you are to be married now."

"Now?" exclaimed Miriam, drawing in her breath.

"Yes, now, this evening," said Mrs. Marcos.

Miriam turned her face sickly to the window. "Oh, God!" she moaned, and clutched the sill with both hands.

"Why do you turn away?" asked Mrs. Todros. "It is beautiful news for a young woman, to know that she will now no longer be a shut girl, I mean, but to-night she may even already begin to be the enjoyment of a good man."

Miriam sprang round, her eyes flaming. There were times, and this was one, when her Sphinx-like calm wholly left her, and a blazing animation, volcanic and reckless, took its place. "Don't you dare to say such things to me again," she cried. "I don't want to hear any more of your hateful thoughts. You will please hold your tongue."

"Miriam, Miriam!" exclaimed Mrs. Marcos. "You must not say such words. Your aunt is quite right. A girl is no use until she is married. It is not ladylike to wish to be virgin."

Miriam took a step forward, her hand raised. For a moment her impulse was to strike that round, pallid face, as though to crush the words back into the mouth which uttered them.

"For God's sake," she gasped, "go away—both of you! Leave me alone. I can't stand your being near me. You have said what you have got to say, and I am ready. That is enough for you to know about my intentions. Understand me: I am quite ready."

"You are very extraordinary," said Mrs. Todros. "I think you are ill that you speak so to your own relations."

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Marcos, "she has illness.

That is the matter. But she is willing to obey her kind father."

"There is no need for any talk," Miriam cried. "I don't want to hear what you think. I tell you I am ready. Where is my father? Tell him to come here."

Mrs. Todros opened the door and looked out. "He is coming upstairs now," she said, turning to Miriam; and a moment later the Pasha entered the room.

He was dressed in faultlessly tailored evening clothes—a dinner jacket and black tie: he looked essentially Occidental, save for the red tarboush which in Egypt he always wore. His monocle was in his eye; and through it he stared calmly at his daughter as he stood motionless in the doorway.

"Tell these women to go away," said Miriam. "I want to speak to you alone."

He bowed slightly, and invited the two women to withdraw, which they did in considerable haste. "Well?" he asked. "What is it?"

Miriam confronted him. "You have broken your promise," she said, speaking very slowly.

"Indeed I have not," he declared. "I told you to mark my words. I said to you, 'I have taken all the necessary steps to make it possible for me to fulfill my promise to the letter.' I promised you that after to-day I would not attempt to restrain your actions; and in order to keep my promise I arranged to hand you over at once to Boutros Bey Andraos. To-morrow and henceforth you will be under his authority, not mine."

"That is a quibble," she answered.

"You extracted the promise by a trick," he said, "and I have fulfilled it by a trick. We are quits."

"Very well," she replied. "I will kill myself."

"I thought that would be your answer," he remarked, "and I am prepared to discuss the matter with you." He sat down. "Now, listen to me. It is my intention that you shall marry an Egyptian; I desire it on patriotic grounds. I have always wanted you to marry Boutros Bey; he is a man of excellent character and great wealth. He has had a good education, and he will treat you with all the deference and understanding you have been taught to expect from a husband. You will probably have as much freedom as a Western woman, and your life with him in his house in Cairo will be all that you can desire."

"I don't love him, and I am in love with another man, and you know it," she answered.

"It is my duty to save you from that infatuation," he told her.

"Only my death will end that," she said, speaking more calmly.

"Very well, then, let me tell you what your death will mean to Colonel Romance. If you kill yourself I will make a public statement, in which I shall describe how he followed you to Egypt, and broke into the women's quarters in this house for the purpose of ruining you; and how he then fled, leaving you to die by your own hand as the only means of wiping out the stain upon your honor. I shall make representations to the British Foreign Office; and either he will he disgraced and cashiered and his career ruined, or else he will be quietly murdered out here, and the British authorities will hush the whole thing up on political grounds. In either case your suicide will mean his complete and utter damnation; so please give this aspect of the matter your most careful thought."

Miriam looked at him aghast, and for some time there was silence in the room. She was trapped, and she knew it. "Very well," she said at length, with the resignation of despair, "I will go through with this farcial marriage, but don't blame me if Boutros Bey regrets it all his life. It goes without saying that I shall not allow him to touch me. I will marry him only on that condition."

"I am afraid you are not in a position to dictate terms," he replied, pointing an admonitory finger at her. "You cannot kill yourself because by so doing you would ruin Colonel Romance, and, moreover, you will hardly have the opportunity to do yourself a serious injury; you cannot run away because I have men on guard everywhere; you cannot postpone the ceremony because the bridegroom and the priest are now waiting downstairs. The only thing you *can* do is to be married unconditionally."

Miriam answered him icily. "You need not explain. I have some brains. I quite see that I am trapped. . . . I suppose you realize that you are behaving like a savage. You have made me ashamed of being your daughter; you have become something loathsome to me, something civilized people would set their dogs on to. I shall, of course, never forgive you, never speak to you again."

"Oh yes, you will," he replied, smiling grimly. "One day you will thank me: firstly, for having saved you from a hopeless mésalliance which would have exposed you to all manner of insults and indignities at the hands of English insularity; secondly, for handing you over to so desirable a husband; and, thirdly, for giving you a lesson in patriotism. I am prepared to wait until that day."

He turned from her, and, opening the door, beck-

oned to the two women who were standing outside. As they entered the room, he left it.

"Well," said Miriam, "what have I got to do? Let's get on with it, for Heaven's sake!" She tapped her foot upon the floor impatiently. "Am I to come downstairs, or what?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Marcos. "The Bey is waiting for you downstairs. He is very impatient. He has been here for two hours."

"Oh, it is a dreadful thing to be married without any *fantasîa,*" sighed Mrs. Todros. "If you had been good, you would have been married with splendor and music and nice dress."

"It seems I've got something to be thankful for, then," Miriam muttered.

"Oh, you have spoilt your beautiful wedding by your badness," said Mrs. Marcos. "Boutros Bey will not wait now at all, because he love you and he think you will be lost if you do not marry him quickly. Oh, it is so shameful! and your clothes are not marriage-clothes, and the Pasha will not allow time for me to get my beautiful dress from the pepper."

"Yes," sighed Mrs. Todros, "and my new dress is with the pepper, too. The moths eat all dresses so bad, yes."

"What do you want me to do?" asked Miriam, again interrupting them.

"You must come down now," said Mrs. Marcos, "and we will wait with you until everything is ready.

"Very well," said Miriam, her hands clenched, "lead the way."

Chapter XIX *The Marriage Ceremony*

They entered the lamplit *salon*, that upper room in which the ferment of the morning had taken place. Here there was nothing to indicate that any unusual events were afoot, except that Rosa, dressed in white muslin and looking like an Italian peasant-girl at a religious festival, was stamping heavily to and fro in her creaking shoes, throwing salt and rose-leaves from a white china bowl which she carried in her hand, and muttering strange words in her native tongue.

"What on earth are you doing?" Miriam asked, impatiently. She was all on edge.

Rosa did not reply, but continued her incantation. Mrs. Todros, however, spoke for her. "It is because of the shame," she explained. "This wedding is so quickly and so poor. It is very unlucky; so Rosa is throwing these charms everywhere to make fear to the Devil. Oh, dear, this salt will spoil all the carpet!"

Mrs. Marcos produced a long white veil of muslin, and arranged it over Miriam's head, so that she felt like a victim being dressed for a sacrifice. Her heart, reacting to the train of thought, began suddenly to beat so sharply that she was sick with the tension of it, and her mouth and lips became dry, though her forehead and hands, on the contrary, were damp with a cold perspiration. She paced up and down

the room, half smothered in the veil; but soon her knees seemed upwilling to support the dead weight of her body, and she sat down upon one of the plush chairs. She thought of the large Boutros Bey, and asked herself again and again in what manner she was going to keep him at arm's length on that night, and on the many nights to come before she could effect her escape.

Mrs. Todros slipped out of the room, and presently returned, whispering a word to Mrs. Marcos. Almost immediately, the later told Miriam to come with her down the stairs, taking hold of her right arm as though to support her, while Mrs. Todros took her left arm in like manner.

The dark staircase led down to the west end of the domed entrance-hall, so that a person coming down the steps would, at the bottom, immediately face the east side of the house; and as Miriam now descended, she heard a confused murmur of voices below her. Mrs. Todros began to tremble violently, and her hand loosened and clasped the girl's arm in nervous spasms. Miriam herself was now strung up to meet the crisis. Her moment of terror had passed, and her only acute sensation was that of extreme annoyance and irritability.

"What the dickens are you trembling for?" she exclaimed rudely and sharply to Mrs. Todros. "I wish to goodness you'd leave go my arm altogether."

"Oh, Miriam!" Mrs. Todros broke out. "Don't speak rough to me. It is all very dreadful."

"What is?" asked Miriam coldly, pausing on the stairway, and looking over her shoulder at the haggard woman who clutched her arm with one hand and the banisters with the other, treading almost upon her heels.

"It is dreadful to have so poor a wedding, and . . . and . . ." she faltered, "you to be married with such hurry, without the bath and the feast . . ."

Miriam set her teeth. The thought passed through her brain that Mrs. Todros had some feelings of sympathy for her, but at this moment she wanted none, and she did not respond.

"To be married," said Mrs. Marcos, as she blundered down the stairs like an elephant, "is a noble good matter."

Again Miriam did not respond. A moment later she came into full view of the hall, and observed, without emotion, that there were many people in it. Facing her, on the east side, a small altar had been set up. It consisted of a kitchen-table covered by a sheet which hid the legs and gave an air of solidity to it. Standing upon this two gilt-framed oleographs leaned against the wall, thus forming a backing to the altar. One of these oleographs represented the Virgin nursing the Divine Babe in a manner which was perhaps more realistic than was necessary; and the other showed St. George slaying an infamous dragon. In front of these pictures a sealed copy of the Holy Gospels lying in a silver case was surrounded by six silver crosses, to each of which three small candles had been affixed, the poor quality of the wax causing a considerable volume of black smoke to rise from the flickering flames blown to and fro by the wind as it penetrated through the door-cracks and the broken glass in the dome.

In front of the altar stood the Coptic priest, a dignified old man, whose brown face was for the most part hidden by an enormous black beard and mustache, but whose dark eyes shone in the varying light of the room. He was clothed in a black robe, not

unlike that worn by the peasants; and upon his head was the black turban which is the distinctive mark of the Coptic priesthood. Near him four native schoolboys, acting as acolytes, held swinging censers in readiness for use. They were dressed in plain white robes, beneath which their cheap unlaced black boots could be seen; and on their heads they wore white caps with crosses embroidered upon them in red cotton.

Girgis Pasha stood at the door of the reception-room. Beside him, somewhat nearer to Miriam, three Coptic notables sat stolidly upon a divan, gazing at the bride as she approached. Opposite them on another divan sat a police-officer in uniform, a local Coptic landowner in the flowing robes of the peasantry, and a seedy-looking individual whom Miriam recognized as the Governor's private secretary. Rosa and the native serving-girl peeped at the assembly from the top of the stairs. Two male servants in long white dresses and red tarboushes carried round a jug of red wine together with some coarse glasses, bidding the guests to drink in honor of the bride and bridegroom.

Miriam, standing at the foot of the stairs, her veiled head erect, received unmoved the gaze of every pair of eyes on the room. She stared, fascinated, at the altar, looking up quickly at the hanging lamp which gave out a smell of oil wholly disproportionate to its feeble light, and then glanced quickly over the guests to ascertain which of them was the bridegroom. She did not see him, and presently her eyes traveled to the corner of the room at her right, towards which the pressure of Mrs. Marcos's arm was directing her. Here she observed a stiff-plush-and-gilt chair, evidently placed in readiness to re-

ceive her, while behind it two less imposing chairs were set for her supporters. She now glanced to the left of the stairway, and here, with a start, she recognized the figure of the man whom she was about to marry. He was seated upon a chair corresponding to that which she was to occupy, but, either by design or by accident, it was turned slightly from her so that her rapid glance did not reveal much of his face to her. He wore a ceremonial cope of white silk, richly embroidered, but somewhat dirty; and beneath this hired church property portions of his black evening dress and stiff white shirt-front could be seen.

As she glanced from him to Girgis Pasha, Mrs. Marcos whispered to her in a shocked voice: "You must not look about you. It is very bad. You must look at the ground. You cannot behave like an English ladyship now. All good Egyptian ladies look only at the ground."

Miriam obediently dropped her eyes, and sat herself down upon the chair. She felt, indeed, that it were better not to look at the persons around her. Their sombre clothes, from which issued the combined odor of naphthalene and scent, appalled her; and, in the uncertain light of the lamps and candles, their eyes gleamed in a manner which suggested even a greater barbarity than that which could actually be attributed to them.

For a moment there was silence in the hall, broken by the sobbing of the wind which was rushing past the house, rattling the shutters and driving the dust through the broken windows of the cupola.

The priest snorted violently, ad spat upon the tiled floor. Then, raising his head, he began in a nasal voice to chant the marriage hymn. The refrain was

Gregorian, and beat upon Miriam's ears with wierd insistence. It was a dirge-like chant, the unintelligible words seeming to tell of sorrows rather than joys, of Eastern tragedy and barbaric crime. The wind moaned a fitting accompaniment to the priest's harsh tones, increasing in volume as the singer's voice rose in power.

Presently the acolytes joined in, their boyish voices ringing lustily through the hall, their higher notes always flat. Girgis Pasha and one or two of his friends made an occasional addition to the chant; but their efforts were not sustained. Everybody coughed immoderately and expectorated freely, these painful spasms being greatly increased when the acolytes began to swing their censers, and to send up clouds of sweet-smelling smoke to the cobwebbed ceiling.

At last the chant came to an end, and the priest cooled his throat with the wine which was immediately proffered him by one of the servants. There was a considerable pause, during which Miriam glanced out of the corner of her eye at Boutros Bey, who remained hunched in his seat with face averted, and large hands nervously grasping the gilt arms of the chair. So this, then was the man who would presently be able to call her his wife! His attitude was one of extreme shyness; and in this she found some comfort.

The feeling of physical sickness overcame her once more, as she remembered that this man who was marrying her knew nothing about her except the one fact that she was good to look upon. He cared nothing for her, except in so far as her body appealed to him. It was bestial. It was horrible. The indignity, the insult of it, made her blood boil.

The priest began to chant a series of prayers in a

solemn monotone, and her thoughts became confused and interrupted. The room was growing hot and stuffy, and the smell of incense, lamp-oil, scent and garlic (for the company had recently dined) was overpowering. She had eaten nothing since tea-time, four hours before; and now she felt faint and hungry.

There was another pause in the ceremony, at the end of which the priest stepped forward, and addressed himself to the company, evidently preaching a sermon to them. His remarks were punctuated by grunts of approval and deep sighs which emanated with regularity from certain members of the company who felt moved so to express their abhorence of the sins of others. Every now and then he cleared his throat with distressing vigor,and once he called for wine, which was brought to him hurriedly. His eyes blazed and his diction grew confused by the power of the wine, of which he had already drunk immoderately. He bellowed and roared, swung his arms and clenched his fists; and at last, with a final effort, he brought his address to a sudden close, mopping his forehead thereafter with his handkerchief.

Mrs. Todros, indifferent to the sermon, was now crying miserably, making, however, little sound save a regulated sniffle and an occasional whispered exclamation of the word "Allah."

Without looking round or raising her eyes Miriam asked her what was the matter.

"It is all so bad," the Egyptian woman murmured. "I have never seen a marriage so unusual. You have not got a beautiful satin dress, and there is no orange-flowers in your hair. And your husband sitting so far away from you."

Miriam interrupted with some interest. "What do you mean? Ought he to be nearer to me?"

"He ought to be sitting close to you. But he would not; he is so shy."

"I'm glad he has the decency to keep at a distance," said Miriam. "Did he arrange our chairs in this way?"

"Yes, he arrange them himself," she sighed. "And there has been no feasting. And it is so—so—unaccustomed that the marriage take place at the house where the bride live instead of at his house. I am sure it is very unlucky. Of course this *is* his own house, because the Pasha rent it from him with the furniture; but still . . ."

Miriam did not answer. The marriage had been arranged at a moment's notice; and, after all, both the Pasha and the Bey knew enough of European customs to appreciate the fact that a rapidly arranged wedding was as effective as an elaborately prepared ceremony.

The acolytes swung their censers energetically. Presently Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Todros rose to their feet, taking hold of Miriam's arms as they did so.

"What now?" the girl asked, her lips and mouth dry once more, and her heart beating. A rapid glance in the direction of the bridegrom revealed to her the fact that Girgis Pasha was helping him to his feet, but his face was still averted. Immediately three or four servants siezed the two chairs in which they had been sitting, and carried them nearer to the altar, placing them side by side in the middle of the room. Mrs. Marcos whispered to Miriam that she must walk forward to this new position and must seat herself beside the bridegroom. This she was constrained

to do, though once again the sense of nausea was strong upon her. She sat herself down heavily upon the right-hand chair; and, obeying Mrs. Marcos's injunction to keep her eyes fixed upon the floor in the manner of all good Coptic brides, she did not satisfy her desire to look closely at the man she was marrying as he, too, sank heavily into his seat beside her.

The priest advanced to them, chanting a psalm; and, raising his hands, he lifted the veil from Miriam's head, throwing it over the side of the chair. Clouds of incense rose from the censers which swung on either side of them. Miriam coughed, but did not raise her eyes. Suddenly a cord, made of silver threads, was placed about her shoulders, and a moment later she realized that, in accordance with one of the Coptic marriage rites, it had been passed around the neck of the bridegroom also, so that they were symbolically and actually tied together. The priest's hand tightened the ceremonial fetter; and, with a gasp of horror, Miriam felt her head being drawn towards that of the man beside her. For a moment she resisted, but immeditely the priest laid hold of her shoulder, pressing her towards the bridegroom.

Their cheeks touched. With an exclamation Miriam put up her hands to free herself. The cord pressed against her neck. She twisted her head around, half rose to her feet, and found herself staring straight into the face of the man, who likewise had raised his hands to relieve the sudden and unexpected pressure of the cord upon his neck. His mouth opened in a sheepish grin, revealing a set of strong white teeth, so close to her that they seemed about to bite her.

Miriam uttered one short, uncontrolled groan which resounded through the room. She tugged madly the cord with her hands, and the absurd face of the bewildered bridegroom bobbed towards her. Then the silver threads snapped, and the man fell back into his seat. The priest caught hold of her arm. She wrenched herself free, and flung the broken cord at his feet.

"I can't, I won't," she cried. "I hardly know him!"

Girgis Pasha sprang forward, with anger in his eyes. Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Todros rushed towards her. Miriam, losing all control, fell upon the floor to elude their excited grasp. She was dragged roughly to her feet, and for awhile she was pressed in by a circle of astonished faces and indignant eyes. The room had grown stifling. Garlic and wine were breathed upon her. Scent and incense filled the air. Her brain reeled; a horrible faintness passed into her limbs: and in this limp condition she was pushed back into her chair.

"You fool," gasped Mrs. Marcos, glaring at her with her one eye, "behave yourself like a lady, not like a woman of the common!"

The priest picked up the severed cord and threw it over her shoulders once more, carrying the broken ends towards the head of the bridegroom, which was sunk miserably upon his breast. He made no movement, and the priest dropped the cord for a moment to nudge him. He raised his head with a jerk, and asked sharply what was required of him. The shock seemed to be galvanizing him into action.

Suddenly he sat upright, pulling himself together, and turned to Miriam. "Look here!" he whispered. "This is just as rotten for me as it is for you. For

Heaven's sake don't make a scene! We're in the soup, both of us, but I'm not making a song about it. Hang it all!—you might have a little consideration for me. Go and have a drink or something, and then come back and let's get on with it."

Miriam stared at him blankly.

Mrs. Todros took Miriam by the arm and dragged her to the foot of the stairs at the back of the hall. Mrs. Marcos threw the veil once more over her head, and floundered around her, railing at her. Miriam, deathly white and trembling desperately, sat down upon a chair, staring before her at the gaudy altar and at the figure of the bridegroom still sitting in his seat, and now talking to the priest who was leaning over him. The guests kept up a continuous muttering which was but partially audible in the hubbub of the wind.

The words he had said to her had instantly altered the whole situation, so far as she was concerned. If only he had spoken thus to her a little earlier, she felt, she would never have made this exhibition of herself. She had seen herself passing into the power of a burly son of Africa, and the thought of what was to follow had made her hysterical; but now she suddenly saw him as a man just as uncomfortable and embarrassed as herself, a companion in trouble. He would be easy to handle; he might even prove himself a friend. All she wanted now was to finish the ceremony as quickly as possible, if only she could stop this trembling. She was no longer frightened of him: she was only faint still from a departed fear.

"Ah, you have disgraced us," said Mrs. Marcos. "You are full of troubles for us."

"Oh, do leave me," Miriam cried, in sickly tones.

"Yes, I do," said Mrs. Marcos. "Rosa is weeping because of you. I shall go to comfort her."

She moved away ponderously, and mounted the stairs, at the top of which the sounds of Rosa's grief were challenging the howling of the storm. Miriam turned beseechingly to Mrs. Todros, who stood beside her.

"Please get me something to drink," she begged. "I feel so faint."

Mrs. Todros sighed deeply, and went upon her errand, returning presently with a glass of wine, which Miriam drank almost at a gulp. A few moments later Mrs. Marcos, returning down the stairs, enquired if Miriam were feeling better.

"Yes," the girl answered. "Please tell them I am ready to go on with the ceremony now."

Mrs. Todros beckoned to the Pasha, who now stood glaring at them from his position beside the bridegroom's chair. He came across the room.

"Well," he asked, "have you got over your hysterics?"

"I am quite ready to go on with the marriage," said Miriam, in a steady voice. "Please tell them to hurry up."

He nodded and muttered some inaudible words. He went over to the priest, and in a few moments Miriam found herself once more seated beside Boutros Bey. The priest took up his position before them, and immediately began to chant the service, which he knew by heart. No attempt was made to readjust the silken cord; but now from the altar the priest carried a silver-gilt crown—a single band ornament in *repoussé*—which was placed upon the head of the bridegroom. Miriam did not dare to look at the man

as he was thus subjected to this holy coronation. She sat quite still while, for an interminable period, the priest recited prayers and chanted psalms before them. This crowning of the bride and bridegroom is one of the main ceremonies of the Coptic marriage. Indeed the word for a crown and that denoting a wedding are identical in the Coptic language. It was therefore a performance of great duration, and to Miriam, who was impatient to have done with the public ceremony, the delay was exasperating.

At last, however, it was over, and the priest now turned his attention to her, placing upon her head a similar crown. To the great relief, the ritual proved not to be so long in the case of the bride as in that of the groom, and soon it was finished. There followed the singing of yet another chant, the refrain of which must have been familiar to the company, for in it they all joined with vigor. At the moment when this was ended, Mrs. Marcos and Mrs. Todros came across the room to her, and without further to-do, she was led away from the altar. As she rose she cast a glance at the man who was now her husband. His large hands were clasped upon the arms of the chair, and he sat upright, a fixed smile upon his brown face. The crown had fallen somewhat towards one side of his head, giving him an appearance at once grotesque and pathetic. Miriam felt something akin to sympathy with him; and as she was conducted by the two Egyptian women across the room, the embarrassed expression in his eyes haunted and distressed her.

"What am I to do now?" she asked Mrs. Marcos, as she was led to the stairway.

"We go up now to the bedroom," she replied, smiling grimly. Miriam bit her lip. They ascended

the staircase, leaving the hubbub, the heat, and the odors behind them; and she breathed deeply as, reaching the upper floor, she tossed her veil aside.

The party thereupon moved over to the room which was generally termed the guest-chamber, and which Miriam, with sinking heart, conjectured to be that prepared as a bridal room. Just inside the doorway crouched an extremely dirty old woman, who smiled and muttered as they approached.

"What is she doing here?" Miriam asked, staring at the woman who now rose to her feet before them.

Mrs. Todros giggled. "She has come," said Mrs. Marcos, also smiling, "to prepare you."

"I don't understand," Miriam said, for she had not heard of that native custom which requires the attendance and the rough skill of a practised old woman on these occasions.

"You will see," answered Mrs. Marcos.

They entered the bedroom, which was lit by two lamps. The large bed was covered by a pink quilt. Tall palm-branches had been placed as a decoration in each of the four corners of the room, while upon the walls several red Egyptian flags were crossed or grouped at regular intervals. Festoons of twisted red and white cloth hung over the bed, and above the door and windows.

The color left Miriam's face, and surged back into it, as she stood staring round the bedroom, appalled at the terrible preparations and their meaning.

The old woman shuffled into the room, grinning at at her. Mrs. Marcos seated herself upon one of the chairs, sighing deeply. Mrs. Todros left the room, and returned almost imediately carrying a new, gaudy silk dressing-gown over her arm. She held the garment up for inspection.

"This is for you to wear, Miriam," she said, laying it upon the bed. "Take off your clothes. I will help you."

"Take off my clothes?" gasped Miriam. "I won't do any such thing." She faced them defiantly.

"Do not speak the nonsense," said Mrs. Todros, irritably.

Mrs. Marcos, rising to her feet, grasped Miriam by the arm, and made an attempt to unfasten her dress. The girl uttered a low cry of indignation. Her right arm flew out straight from the shoulder, and Mrs. Marcos fell in a heap against the wall. For a moment she sat upon the floor staring open-mouthed at the infuriated girl; and then there fell from her lips a string of Arabic oaths which fortunately Miriam could not comprehend. Mrs. Todros, dancing with excitement, turned her eyes from the one to the other; while the old woman, uttering shrill little cries, attempted to stem the flood of fearful imprecations which gushed from the lips of Mrs. Marcos, as she clambered to her feet.

"Do you think," cried Miriam, confronting the panting women, "that I am going to submit like a lamb to this sort of thing? I've been educated in modern England, and I'm not going to stand ancient Egypt. I tell you straight I am not going to undress." She seized a cane chair with both hands. "If you try to touch me I'll break your heads. I mean what I say. I'll break your heads."

Mrs. Marcos waited to hear no more. She floundered to the door and opened it, meaning to call for help. Mrs. Todros and the old woman also ran to the door. But in the passage outside they found themselves in the presence of the Governor, who had just ascended the stairs.

"Now what is the matter?" he asked.

Miriam ran to him in a frenzy. "For God's sake send these women away," she cried. "It is disgusting! How dare you leave me in their hands at such a time?"

"I am sorry," he replied. "It is the custom. However, I dare say we can dispense with it. Would you like your husband to come to you at once?"

"Yes, yes!" Miriam exclaimed. "Send him up and let me talk to him."

The Pasha at once went down the stairs, and Miriam, entering the room once more, slammed the door, leaving the women in the passage outside. She made a dash at the flags and festons and ripped them from the walls, throwing them under the bed. Then she collected the palm-leaves and flung them likewise beneath the bed.

There came to her ears the sound of a commotion outside the door—ejaculations, laughter, the clapping of hands, whispering, subdued cheers; and then followed a hesitating knock.

"Come in," she said, her heart beating.

The door opened, and the tall figure of Boutros Bey was pushed by many hands into the room, some of them striking him heartily upon the back. The entire wedding company, it seemed, had escorted him up the stairs; for such is the Egyptian custom, and, indeed, such was the custom in England, also, until a few generations ago. For a moment laughter and cheering filled the air: then the door was shut, Boutros Bey turned the key, and there was silence.

Miriam stood back against the wall as he came shyly into the middle of the room. "Please sit down," she said, speaking with some calmness. "I have a lot to say to you."

He held up his finger. "Ssh!" he whispered. "They are all outside listening. It is the custom, you know."

"Can't you tell them to go away?" she asked.

He shook his head, and seated himself upon a chair, gazing intently at his shoes.

"Very well," said Miriam, "we must talk in whispers. In the first place I want you to understand that I have been forced into this marriage. . . ."

"So have I," he replied, without raising his eyes. "It's pretty awful for us, isn't it?"

Miriam's curiosity was aroused. "Who forced you?" she asked.

"Well, you see," he explained, "my father practically arranged it with your father years ago. He's dead now; but before he died he wrote to me, when I was up at Oxford, and told me again that it was his wish. Then a few weeks ago your father talked it over with me; and this morning he telephoned to me from here—I was at the Winter Palace at Luxor—and told me he thought you were going to elope with an English officer, and asked if I'd agree to an immediate marriage."

"And you consented?" Her tone was condemnatory.

"I jolly well had to," he answered, spreading out his hands. "In the first place, your father is now a power in the land; and he could ruin my career if I went against his wishes and my dead father's. Then again, as he pointed out, it was a patriotic duty to save you from this English fellow."

"That's no business of yours," she answered, frowning.

"So I said," he told her, shrugging his heavy shoulders, and glancing nervously at her. "But he

insisted, and I dare say he was right. Tell me, are you in love with this man?"

"Yes, I am," she replied, shortly.

"Well, then, I'll be frank with you. I'm in love with somebody else also; but I can't marry her because she's married already. She's an Englishwoman. She'll make a most awful row when she hears I've married you!"

Miriam came towards him, all fear of him gone. "I say!" she whispered. "What on earth are we to do?"

He looked up at her. His shyness was leaving him, and he smiled. "We'll just have to be friends, I suppose," he said, "and help each other. The only trouble is that if I let you see much of this man when we are in Cairo, people will think I'm an awful nincompoop; and if I go about with Victoria—that's her name—I shall be thought rather a rotter, you know. It's going to be difficult." He turned to a scrutiny of his shoes; but presently he looked up again. "Tell me what happened this morning exactly."

Miriam seated herself near him, and related in a whisper the events of the morning at considerable length. "So you see," she said in conclusion, "I've been forced into marrying you, and here we are!"

He rose from his chair. "Just wait a moment," he said. "I think I can get rid of these eavesdroppers now."

He went to the door, and, turning the key, opened it very slightly. He said a few words in Arabic, which Miriam did not understand; and immediately there was an outburst of cheering, accompanied by the shrill joy-cries of the women—a sound not unlike

the whinny of a horse. He then shut and locked the door again, and turned to Miriam.

"Now they will go away and leave us for the night," he said.

"Why, what have you told them?" she asked.

He hesitated shyly. "Well, you see," he faltered, "they have to wait until the bridegroom says everything is all right. That is our custom. You'll hear guns being fired outside in a minute. . . ."

Bang! Bang! Bang! The guns were let off in the street outside almost as he spoke; and the sounds of cheering came to them through the closed door. Miriam blushed scarlet, and turned away, moving aimlessly towards the window. This calling a spade a spade was horrifying. Here was marriage stripped of its veil of idealism; its secret shouted from the housetops; its most sacred consummation greeted with cheers!

"Don't go near the window!" he exclaimed. "You mustn't be seen. You're supposed to be in bed. . . . It's all rather awful, isn't it? So beastly primitive! That's the worst of being educated in England: England got over all this sort of thing two or three hundred years ago—at least, they've got over most of it, though they still have the public ceremony, and the send-off, and the cheers and giggling. We'll get over it, too, in another generation or two. We're sort of pioneers, you and I."

"Have we got to stay here all night?" Miriam asked, nervously.

"Yes, of course," he answered. "But don't worry. You can sleep on the bed and I'll doss down on the floor." He was no longer in the least shy of her, and his easiness brought comfort to her heart.

So intense was her relief that the tears came into her eyes.

"To-morrow," he said, "we'll go to Cairo by the morning train, and you can post a letter to Colonel Romance telling him where you are. We'll ask him to dinner, shall we! . . . Why, what's the matter? You're crying."

At this she sat down suddenly upon a chair and buried her face in her hands. She sobbed as though her heart would break.

He came to her side and put his hand upon his shoulder. "Poor old girl!" he said. "You've had the very devil of a day, haven't you?"

She blew her nose violently, and attempted to dry her eyes. : "It's all right," she faltered. "I'll be better in a minute. It's only because I'm so awfully relieved and happy . . . and grateful to you."

PART III

Chapter XXI *Crude Facts*

Colonel Romance, dressing for dinner in his rooms at Shepheard's Hotel in Cairo, perused for the tenth time the note he had received from Miriam; and once again he scratched his head in perplexity. He was not sure whether extreme happiness or keen disappointment were his dominant emotion. He was not at all certain how to handle this peculiar situation: there was so much in it which was distasteful to him.

When he had first read the note, on his return to Ismuay from Luxor, on the evening of the day following the marriage, he had been frankly horrified. It began with the brief statement that her father had arranged an immediate wedding, and that she had been forced to go through with it. Then she had told him that her husband was in love with somebody else, that he had behaved very decently, and had shown not the least sign of amorousness, and that he was most anxious to arrange a meeting so that the whole situation might be discussed. She went on to say that she was posting this letter to him, to the care of Captain Erskine, and that, by the time he received it, she would be in, or nearing, Cairo.

"I don't know," she said in conclusion, "whether you still wish to see me. I don't know whether events are hurrying me onwards to the main part of my story, or whether the end of it has been reached and a new tale begun. At any rate, all the circumstances

of the case are now altered. I am no longer my father's prisoner: I am nominally under the protection of quite a nice and broad-minded young man; but by that same token I am now not free to marry you or anybody else, and need therefore no longer be a source of anxiety to Mrs. Garrett. The thing that troubles me is that in all these changed circumstances I remain the same person—Miriam."

He had come down to Cairo by the first possible train, and had at once written to Boutros Bey Andraos, saying that he would be glad to see him at the earliest convenient date and hour. It had seemed to him more correct to write to her husband than to Miriam herself; for he had an English sense of propriety, and desired to sin, if sin it was to be, with due politeness. Nobody should say that he stole wives from their husbands.

Boutros Bey had replied at once, sending him a letter by hand, inviting him to dinner in the evening, and now the Colonel was putting the final touches to his toilet, and had paused to read again Miriam's letter, and especially that last sentence—"I remain the same person." The same person who had said "I love you with all my heart and soul," did it mean? Yes, that was what she intended to convey; and therefore, when he met her at dinner that night, there would be this understanding between them. It would be wonderful . . . and yet he was embarrassed by the thought.

All the circumstances were indeed changed. Being a married woman, she could no longer be wooed as a man woos a maid: their love would be like an intrigue, and were it to come to fruition, she would not be his bride but his mistress. He must no longer think of her as a possible mother of his children;

for those children would be bastards. Yet, on the other hand, there was now no reason to face the world with defiance, to turn over and over in his mind the thought of marriage with her, wondering whether he were right thus to outrage public opinion. The dread of the step was gone, the anxiety was over; for now their love was to be a secret thing. In this there was a certain relief, which he hardly dared to recognize; but there was also disappointment, bitter disappointment. He had found the word "wife" so sweet: he hated the word "mistress."

Perhaps she would have strong views in regard to the sanctity of marriage, even a Coptic marriage which had had no actuality. Perhaps she would now reckon herself a fountain sealed, a sort of nun, at best a platonic friend. That would be a situation impossible to endure, and he would have either to lay siege to her virtue or go out of her life. Perhaps, on the other hand, she would deem herself now free of all restraint, and would defiantly show him the direct route to the divorce court. That was an enthralling prospect, but it contained a very real element of anxiety. Such things were the fiery black opals of life's necklace.

One fact, however, was clear in his mind, and though he tried to evade it, he knew in his heart that the thought had arrived and would not again depart. Miriam was no longer a girl to be wooed in sweet innocence: she was a woman to be loved in passionate knowledge. Her purity was now become pudicity; the forbidden fruit had been eaten in their Garden of Eden, and they both would be aware henceforth of their nakedness. He disliked the thought at the same time that he was thrilled by it.

He was ill at ease as he drove through the noisy

streets of Cairo to the address which had been given to him; and when he arrived at his destination his heart was beating fast. The house, a large green-shuttered building standing in its own garden, was situated in the residential quarter of the city, known as Kasr-ed-Doubara, where the streets are wide and clean, and each mansion rises from amidst the trees in sequestered dignity, its white façade lit at night by the electric lamps at its great gateposts. He rang the bell nervously, and was admitted by a native servant, a negro, clad in a Turkish livery of a dark red color, the chief features of which were a Zouave jacket and full, baggy trousers. By this man he was conducted across a marble hall, hung with gilt mirrors, to a large and brilliantly lit drawing-room, furnished and decorated in the French style of 1860, all white and gold and rose-colored satin: palatial, ornate, but saved from vulgarity by being old-fashioned. Beneath the marble mantelpiece a cheerful fire was burning (for December nights in Cairo are chilly); and in front of this, upon a white sheepskin hearthrug, Colonel Romance took up his stand, blinking at the blaze of electric light in the great chandelier which hung in the middle of the room like an arrested deluge of glass.

He had not long to wait. Presently Boutros Bey entered the room, a bulky, youthful and immaculate figure in evening dress, having nothing to mark him as an Oriental except his red tarboush and a complexion slightly darker than that of a southern European.

"Colonel Romance?" he said, coming forward with outstretched hand. "How do you do? So pleased to meet you."

The Colonel returned his salutations, and suddenly

failed to find anything to say. Both he and his host were obviously embarrassed.

"My wife has spoken to me about you," the younger man began, attempting to overcome his shyness. "Awfully good of you to come to see her. You and I must have a great confab."

"Oh yes . . . quite," Colonel Romance replied awkwardly; and then, to change the conversation, "You have a fine place here."

"I inherited it from my father, who bought it and the furniture from a Greek moneylender; it belonged originally to the French mistress of a Pasha at the court of the Khedive Ismail, and the moneylender seized the whole thing at her death. She was strangled in one of the rooms upstairs. I believe there used to be tremendous orgies here in this room. I am told that on one occasion, when some European crown prince was being entertained, the French lady received her guests in this very room with nothing on except a pair of stockings. Damned bad form, what?"

"'Yes. No wonder she was strangled."

Boutros Bey shrugged his shoulders. He was shy. He evidently wanted to appear to be a good fellow before this English officer; and, as every Egyptian believes, a good fellow in England is a man who tells indecent stories about women. He therefore related the story of the strangling, with the addition of certain obscene features invented in honor of the occasion. His fluent English, and the slang terms he used, sounded very curious, spoken, as they were, with a slight foreign accent—a tendency to pronounce the letter *p* as *b*, and every *s* as *z*, and to make much of his *g's* and *r's*. It was as little pleas-

ing as was the mixture of the mannerisms of Oxford and those of the Orient.

"By the way," he said, at the close of this narration, "there's a lady coming to dinner to-night to meet you. Mrs. Boscombe-Wiggin, an English lady. I got to know her when I was up at Oxford, and, to tell you the truth, we fell in love with one another; but we couldn't get married because her husband is alive. He is in an asylum, poor chap—drink, you know. So she came out here to live, so that we could be together. I keep her, you see. She hasn't met Miriam yet; but when she heard of my marriage, of course, there was rather a scene. She calmed down, however, when she realized that it was only formal, and that you and Miriam were in love. Poor Victoria!—that's her name: it was rather a blow for her."

Colonel Romance felt exceedingly uncomfortable. The coming dinner would be awful: his Egyptian host and this English mistress of his; Miriam and himself. It would be so awkward for Miriam.

The door opened and Miriam entered the room, wearing one of the evening dresses she had bought in London; a simple, modest affair, and chosen to-night for that reason. As a matter of fact she had considered for some time the desirability of making herself look as plain as possible—scraping her hair back, and even penciling some faint lines upon her forehead and at the corners of her mouth; for she was most anxious that her husband and his mistress should regard her as an unimportant factor in their lives. But she could not bear the thought of appearing ugly in the eyes of Colonel Romance, and the best she could do was to put on her simplest dress.

Perhaps, she thought, this was all that was neces-

sary; for Boutros Bey had taken very little notice of her during the two days of their life in Cairo, and had deliberately been out to every meal. He had been perfectly polite, and had placed his automobile at her disposal, so that she had twice enjoyed quite an interesting drive. Her freedom was delightful to her, after those dreadful weeks at Ismuay; and, being truly grateful to her husband for his tact (she was too feminine to term it indifference), she would have liked, by concealing her good looks, to save him from any unpleasantness on the part of his mistress. Yet, how could she bear to disappoint Colonel Romance?

"Ah, there you are!" said Boutros Bey pleasantly. "Here is your Colonel waiting for you. I was just going to tell him all about our enforced marriage. It was all pretty awful, you know," he added, turning to his guest, after the latter had shaken hands with Miriam, "and this poor girl had hysterics in the middle of the ceremony. I can tell you, she made me feel a priceless ass. . . . I say!—it was pretty hot stuff your climbing on to the roof, what?"

Miriam and Robert Romance gazed at one another in profound discomfort; but before they could exchange more than a conventional phrase or two, the door again opened, and Mrs. Boscombe-Wiggin was ushered in, her Egyptian lover thereupon hastening across the room to her and kissing her hand in Continental fashion.

Mrs. Wiggin was a beautiful peroxidized blonde, standing a good six feet in her high-heeled shoes, and having a magnificent figure, marred by somewhat large hands and feet. She was perhaps some four or five years older than her Egyptian lover. She wore about her expansive neck a splendid necklace of diamonds, and her hands drooped with the weight of

many glittering rings, one of which encircled her index finger. Her dress was of black satin, and, being worn close to her skin, it revealed immediately the fact—to put it technically—that she was an umbilicated mammal of normal and healthy proportions. Any far-seeing theatrical manager about to produce a musical comedy would have accepted her gladly as a show-lady in his chorus of statuesque English beauties, in spite of her hands and feet.

She was the daughter, not, as such ladies usually state, of a clergyman in the country, but of a police-inspector at Oxford, and she had married, during the war, an army chaplain (Nonconformist, of course), much beloved by the men as a jolly good sport, and who, as a result of his efforts to win their esteem, was now dying of delirium tremens, a painful affliction, which he was bearing with Christian piety and resignation. She had educated herself into so passable an imitation of what is called "a perfect lady" that Boutros Bey could hardly have been expected to realize that she was one degree lower in the social scale even than that. In England he had seen few educated women except those who were the wives or daughters of Oxford dons; and in such gross company a golden-haired Juno, fit for a place in a London musical comedy, was a queen.

Mrs. Wiggin—Victoria Boscombe-Wiggin—came now across the room with the movements of a mannequin, and bore her introduction to Miriam with the utmost graciousness, although an observant onlooker might have seen that she was actually staggered by the girl's beauty and perfect English manners. She had expected, it would seem, a half-educated native woman, and she must have been horrified to find in Miriam a most dangerous rival. Her greeting of

Colonel Romance, however, was unaffectedly cordial.

"I always have a soft place in my heart for a soldier," she said. "I was brought up with the military, you see, and my husband is an army chaplain. Poor fellow, he was badly gassed in the war. I wonder if you ever knew General Robinson of the Army Service Corps: he was a very dear friend of my father's."

She spoke in this strain for some moments, establishing her position as a lady of unimpeachable credentials; but presently, believing in candor, she slipped her arm through that of Boutros Bey, and attacked the subject nearest to her heart. "Well," she said, with a pretense at laughter, "here we are, and now what's to be done? Please do let's all be frank."

"Yes, that's right," Boutros Bey commented, attempting to seem at ease. "We all know what we are here for: the question before the House is what's to be done about Colonel Romance and my nominal wife here?"

Miriam became remarkably calm. "No, that is not the question," she said. "Please leave Colonel Romance out of it. The point is simply this. I didn't want to marry Boutros, and he didn't want to marry me. We were forced into it, and we have agreed to lead perfectly separate lives. The question now is one only between Mrs. Wiggin and myself. . . ."

"What do you mean?" that lady asked sharply and anxiously.

"I mean I want you to talk the matter over with me alone, so that we can decide how I can interefere least with your interests and life."

"Oh, I see," said Mrs. Wiggin, with evident relief.

The servant entered the room, and announced that

dinner was served. Thereupon, the four of them moved towards the door, and, as they did so, Miriam turned to Mrs. Wiggin. "I want you to be the hostess, and I will be the guest," she smiled. "It is your right."

The dinner proved to be not so difficult after all. Colonel Romance seemed, by tacit agreement, determined to keep the conversation on general lines, and to prevent any return to the matter which had brought them together. The face of Mrs. Wiggin was a study. She could hardly take her eyes from Miriam during the entire meal, and when she turned them away, it was but to watch her lover, and to satisfy herself that he was not paying undue attention to his wife: one could almost hear her saying to him, "Don't you dare . . .!"

The dinner itself, however, was expeditiously served, perfectly cooked, and entirely Occidental; and the champagne, which was of the best, helped to lessen the strain. Colonel Romance, in fact, found the situation so much easier towards the end of the meal that he was even enabled to tell two or three amusing stories, at which Mrs. Wiggin laughed extremely loudly; and when a reactionary lull renewed for a moment the original sense of awkwardness, he feverishly performed a balancing trick with a coin and two forks, and, later, pretended, by a clever little imposture, to bite a piece out of his glass. He worked, indeed, really hard, and Mrs. Wiggin declared him to be "a perfect scream."

"Give me the military for real fun," she said. "I remember General Robinson used to keep us all in fits of laughter. Mr. Wiggin, too, had a great sense of humor, though, of course, he had to suppress his love of fun a bit in the interests of religion."

They rose from the table, and Miriam at once became businesslike. "Now, Mrs. Wiggin," she said, "we can have our little talk."

Colonel Romance gave her a despairing glance. He had nothing to say to Boutros Bey: he wanted only to talk to Miriam. The embarrassment he had felt at the beginning of the evening was now gone, and he was yearning to be alone with her, so that he might break down any barriers which the circumstances of the case had set up. Yet here he was, forced to make himself polite to this rather vulgar young Egyptian, and goodness only knew what the man would say.

His worst fears were realized half an hour later when, still over their cigars and port, his host deliberately turned the talk to Miriam.

"Look here," he said, emboldened by the wine, "you must forgive my asking you a rather pointed question, but you see I must know, mustn't I? Do you want to go up to Miriam's room to-night?"

"Good Lord!" the Colonel exclaimed in horror.

"Oh, it's all right," Boutros Bey explained. "The servants go to bed early, and Mrs. Wiggin will probably sleep with me. You won't be disturbed; and, to tell you the truth, I rather hope you will stay, because it will show Victoria that everything's O.K. between you two, and that there's no cause for her to be jealous. You see?"

"But, my dear fellow," Colonel Romance expostulated, "Miriam is not that sort of girl. Don't you understand that she and I are just innocently in love with one another? We wanted—at least, I did—to run away and get married; and then came this awful situation, and Heaven knows what's going to happen now."

Boutros Bey looked at him with a smile of disbelief. "But do you mean to tell me that she is . . . well . . . *virgo intacta,* as we used to say at Oxford?"

Colonel Romance made a gesture of annoyance. This was simply unbearable. "I don't think we have a right to discuss her," he said angrily, "any more than we would discuss any other decent and nice girl."

The Egyptian brushed his words aside. "Don't take offense," he answered. (Yes, the wine had certainly gone to his head.) "I think we in Egypt take a more matter-of-fact view of these things than you do. With us the question of a woman's virginity is a legitimate subject of conversation, just as we might ask whether she had fair hair or dark. I didn't understand that you and Miriam were only . . . friends. Still, as far as I am concerned, she is your property, not mine. She does not appeal to me; so don't you worry. I am in love with Victoria, and I owe it to her to get rid of Miriam as soon as possible."

"What d'you mean?" Colonel Romance asked, staring hard at him.

"Well, it's like this. I want to divorce Miriam, but I can't offend her father, you see, because he might hurt my career. I'll be frank with you. If I can prove to Girgis Pasha that his daughter has—well, you know what I mean, then I can divorce her, and can be so absolutely justified that the old man cannot possibly take offense. But if there's nothing to be proved between you and her, how can I divorce her—or, in other words, how can I free her, a chaste virgin, from her marriage with me so that she can marry you? It's most awkward! I had no idea . . ."

"But you can't divorce her!" the Colonel exclaimed. "It would disgrace her."

"Oh, I'd arrange it quite quietly," he replied. "If you go up to her room, I won't lay any trap for you, or make a scandal of it. My idea was to arrange that on one occasion there should be witnesses—you and I could fix that up: they'd see you going up to her room. Then I'd give you time to elope with her, and get out of the country; and then I'd quietly divorce her. It would be quite simple, and her father wouldn't blame me. But if you have scruples, I should not be able to take action, because her father would not feel I was justified. In a word, her chastity is a nuisance, if you don't mind my saying so. Anyhow, I expect Miriam is now being told the same thing, because Victoria and I discussed my scheme yesterday; so when you see her again presently you will both realize what you have to do to obtain your happiness."

"But this is monstrous!" Colonel Romance exclaimed. He felt inclined to hit the young man in the face; and yet he saw, in a perplexed way, that he was speaking reasonably according to his own lights. "Look here!" he said, rising to his feet. "I simply can't face Miriam after this. Surely you can see that it wouldn't be decent. . . . I'm going home. You can say I've been taken ill."

He was about to move from the table when, suddenly, the door opened and Miriam entered the diningroom. Her expression was calm and serene; her movements betrayed not the least agitation. Colonel Romance stared at her as at a ghost, but she met his look of dismay with a sort of understanding smile. Again he felt that she was older than he, and that she could be trusted to show the way.

"Boutros," she said, addressing her husband, "will you go into the drawing-room and talk to Mrs.

Wiggin? I want to have a word alone with Colonel Romance." Her voice was slow and quiet.

"Certainly," he replied, genially, and at once walked out of the room, shutting the door after him.

As soon as they were alone, Miriam turned to her lover. "Has he been talking to you about what he proposes to do?" she asked.

"Yes," he replied, lowering his eyes before her steady gaze, and fiddling with the end of his cigar, as he stood there, separated from her by the disarrayed table, with its red-shaded lights. He had seen in her face, or thought he had seen, that she had been told exactly what was expected of her; and, in consequence, she was as cold and distant as the moon, yet, like the moon, she was full of enchantment.

He understood thoroughly what she was feeling, for his own feelings were similar. Their love—that intangible and delicate thing—had been seized upon by the material hands of the East, and had been thumbed and moulded into a concrete shape. It had been reduced from an exalted dream into a specific physical fact, from a phantasy into a definite performance. It had been sprayed with poison, so to speak—the poison of matter-of-fact actuality, and its gossamer tissue, its delicate membrane, had been shrivelled and torn.

A mind trained in the English way, as his and Miriam's had been, saw love as an exalted emotional experience, almost an adventure of the soul; something beyond the range of space and time. In spite of conventional marriage customs, no part of it could really be reduced to an act to be performed on a certain day, at a certain hour, or in a certain place: it was an eternal dream to be specialized only when the elusive ecstasy happened to come upon the two lovers,

unpremeditated. But according to the way of the East, it was a formulated business as precise as the call to prayer; and the proposal which Boutros Bey had made had, by its definite nature, caused them both to recoil from it.

"You see, my dear," said Miriam, fingering the edge of the table, "there's only one thing to be done. I must go back to England either with Mrs. Garrett or alone. You can travel on the same ship if you like. It doesn't much matter what happens so long as we can get out of this beastly, sordid atmosphere. I shall make a bolt for it secretly, without telling Boutros, and I'll leave it entirely to his discretion whether he divorces me or not."

He came round the table to her. "Supposing he can't divorce you, or refuses to do so?"

"Then I shall remain in England, and try to earn my living."

"Supposing he does divorce you?" He took hold of her hand, and she allowed it to remain in his. "Will you marry me, Miriam?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "I've had enough of plans," she said. "I'm frightened to death of things that are arranged."

"So am I," he answered. "I'll put it in another way. Do you love me?"

She nodded. 'I meant what I said at Ismuay. I thought it was my last word on earth."

"I love you, too, Miriam," he said, standing very close to her, yet hesitating to take her in his arms, for the one reason that Mrs. Wiggin, he knew, had just told her what was expected of her. He would rather have died than have given her just then the impression that he was going to take advantage,

calculatingly and licentiously, of the favorable situation.

His misery, so eloquently expressed in his face, produced in Miriam an almost motherly reaction. "Come here," she said, putting her hands upon his shoulders, and smiling faintly, like the old gods and goddesses smiles in the ancient temples. "Kiss me," she whispered.

He kissed her, quietly, reverently. Then, suddenly, he seized hold of her. He was about to kiss her wildly, passionately, when he saw in her eyes that look of fear, which is the token of a woman's adoration; and he misunderstood it. He knew that in her mind Mrs. Wiggin's offer of free license must be festering, as the similar offer made to him by Boutros Bey was festering in his own. He dreaded her thinking that he wished to make use of the opportunity, and therefore he released her from his embrace. That one tender kiss was enough, surely; and the wish for it had come from her. She was divine.

"Now I'm going," he said. "Look here, I must see you to-morrow. Will you dine with me at Shepheard's?"

She nodded. "Yes," she replied.

"Very well. Be there at half-past seven. Come on!—we'll go into the drawing-room, and I'll make my excuses. Oh, you wonderful, glorious woman!"

His face was radiant.

On the following morning Mrs. Garrett arrived at Shepheard's Hotel, having traveled down from Luxor by the night express. Captain Erskine, nominally owing to some business in Cairo, had also traveled down by the same train, having boarded it at Ismuay. Actually, he had come to Cairo to make an attempt to divert his friend from any reckless act into which the new situation might lead him. Mrs. Garrett was in an agitated state of mind, for at Luxor she had received a brief note from Colonel Romance, written from Ismuay, telling her that he had just heard of Miriam's marriage and was going at once to Cairo. She had expected to find him in deep gloom, and her surprise was great when, in answer to a message sent up to his room, he presently joined her at her breakfast table, seemingly in the highest spirits.

"But, my dear boy," she said, "I expected to find you prostrated with grief; and here you are, ordering porridge and eggs-and-bacon, and positively beaming on the world."

"Well," he answered, "here's Miriam married to a very decent young fellow, leading a perfectly Western sort of life, instead of being shut up in that awful prison at Ismuay. Naturally, I am tremendously relieved."

"Have you seen her?" she asked, anxiously.

"Oh yes," he replied, rather casually. "I dined with her and her husband last night. They've got a topping house in Kasr-ed-Doubara, near the British Residency."

Mrs. Garrett stared at him, her cup of coffee arrested in mid-air on its way to her lips. "Do you mean to say her husband allowed you to break in on their honeymoon like that? Really, Robert, it was hardly decent, was it?"

"Oh, he's taken rather a fancy to me," he answered. "He treated me as an old friend of the family." He smiled sweetly at her.

"But the deception, Robert!" she exclaimed. "The awful deception!—it is so crude. They've only been married three days or so, and must be in the full tide of . . . well, their intimacy."

Colonel Romance felt embarrassed. "Oh, nonsense!" he ejaculated. "He knows that Miriam and I are in love."

Mrs. Garrett raised her hands. "Worse and worse!" she said. "These Orientals must be utterly callous. If I were a man who'd just married a woman in love with another man I'd . . . well, I'd rather die than have him to dinner."

"Oh, but this fellow, Boutros Bey, is quite interested in our predicament," he explained.

"I call it disgusting!" she snapped. "But how you can put yourself in such a position beats me."

"You don't understand," he told her. "Boutros Bey is in love with a certain Mrs. Wiggin. She was at the dinner party, too."

Mrs. Garrett's face showed her horror. "But this is appalling!" she exclaimed. "It is like these orgies at Los Angeles one reads about in the papers. Well, the only decent thing you can do is to give them a

wide berth. I should never have thought it of Miriam. I always regarded her as something pure and virginal."

"That's just the trouble," he answered. "She is."

"She sounds like it," his sister-in-law sniffed. "Married to one man, flirting with another, and entertaining her husband's mistress! A pretty picture of chaste virginity!"

"I tell you you don't understand," said Colonel Romance, becoming somewhat heated. "Miriam is only married in name. Her husband wants to divorce her at once, and he wants me to go off with her. But Miriam and I are not going to have this sort of arrangements made for us. I've always felt that you can't make plans when you're in love; you can't let other people into your private affairs. That's why I have always hated the idea of a marriage ceremony; it's so beastly coarse. Marriage! Think what it means. You fall in love with a girl and want to live with her always, and to share everything with her—share all the most wonderful and secret experience of Nature. So you've got to fix a date upon which you will begin to do so, and then tell all your friends, and invite them to come and see you start. Then you go to church, and the parson tells you, in words he ought to be ashamed to use, that you are now licensed to do this particular thing; and then everybody sings hymns and the organ plays; and then you are cheered at and jeered at, and everybody laughs and throws things at you, and off you go to spend your first night together on the exact date fixed weeks before. Ugh! it's cold-blooded and beastly in the extreme. It's a parody of what Nature intended: all the spontaneousness which alone makes it decent is gone. Miriam and I are just in that predicament

now. Boutros Bey wants us to 'get married,' so to speak, by agreement with him, on a fixed date, when he can arrange for witnesses to spy on us; and then he'll be able to divorce her, and I shall be able to marry her. But we don't feel inclined to oblige, thank you! We're not going to reduce our love to a schedule for anybody's convenience!"

Mrs. Garrett stared at him in dumb amazement as he poured forth this rigmarole with burning conviction, and with a sort of effrontery born of exasperation. For some moments she did not speak; then, at length, swallowing audibly, "Robert!" she exclaimed. "I honestly believe you're suffering from a touch of the sun or something. By all this nonsense, do you mean that you and Miriam have considered the question of her divorce and re-marriage to you?"

"Yes, that's the idea," he replied. "But we're both jibbing at the crudity of it."

"I'm glad to hear you have some decency left," she declared. "I take it, then, that you are going to abandon this folly, and go back to England."

"I don't know what I am going to do," he sighed, scratching his head. "We may have to run away together."

"Oh, really, you are unendurably idiotic!" she cried. "First you say one thing; then you contradict yourself and say the opposite. If you were to elope with Miriam, do you realize that you would have to resign from the Army, and would be cut by everybody?"

"Yes, I've decided to send in my papers, anyway," he answered. "I'm sick of soldiering."

"But your career . . .!"

"I don't know that soldiering in India *is* a career. I want to develop my farm lands in England, and I

want to spend my spare time in doing something useful for my country, such as exploring new territory here in Africa or something of that kind. I've always wanted to."

"Well, you won't be helping your country by getting mixed up in an Egyptian divorce case," she told him.

"'That's where you're wrong," he answered. I . . ."

She interrupted him angrily. "Look here, Robert," she said. "I'm going to wash my hands of you. I think your behavior is despicable. I wish I had never followed you to this horrible country. I'm going back to England by the first boat, and I don't want to see you again till you've come to your senses."

She had not finished her breakfast; but she rose from the table with dignity, and, giving him a withering look, marched out of the room.

"I say, Mary! wait a minute," he called after her; but she did not turn. "Oh, well," he muttered to himself, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I suppose she's right according to her own lights, but she makes me tired. . . . Waiter! Bring me some more bacon, will you? This is quite cold. I do wish you'd serve things hot."

"It was quite hot when I brought it, sir," the waiter answered.

Colonel Romance frowned. "There's no need to make excuses," he said, with frigid dignity. "Don't let it occur again."

After breakfast he found a note awaiting him at the porter's office; it was from Captain Erskine, who stated that he was staying at the Turf Club, and

that he would come round to the hotel at about three o'clock that afternoon.

"Oh, damn!" muttered the Colonel. "More talk, I suppose."

He went for a stroll down the narrow, crowded street, and was very short-tempered with a native hawker who wanted to sell him photographs of Oriental ladies with no clothes on. Having nothing to do, he strolled into Cook's office and asked for a sailing list; and, with this for literature, he presently returned to the hotel and seated himself in a basket chair upon the far-famed terrace overlooking the street. He had no idea when he was going to leave Egypt, but he expected that Miriam would probably make a bolt for it soon; and her suggestion that he should travel by the same boat presented a very enthralling possibility. He saw in the list that liners were leaving for different parts of Europe almost every day: there was one for Venice sailing at daybreak the next morning, another for Marseilles on the following day, another for Brindisi on the day after, and so forth; and the clerk at Cook's office had told him that at this time of year the ships going west were not at all full. He would show the list to Miriam when he saw her at dinner. Dinner! How on earth was he going to kill the hours until then?

Somehow the morning passed; but at luncheon there was no sign of Mrs. Garrett, for which fact he was not ungrateful. Punctually at three o'clock Captain Erskine called for him, as he sat drowsing on the warm terrace smoking a cigar, and suggested that they should go for a walk across the Kasr-el-Nil bridge and around the island of Ghezireh. To this Colonel Romance readily agreed. He hated in-

activity; and, anyhow, a walk might make an argument less easy of accomplishment.

In the heat of the afternoon sun they set out like the long and short of it: Captain Erskine tall and loose-limbed, and Colonel Romance small and neat; and, without exchanging any remarks of importance, they at length crossed the bridge over the lazy Nile, and so passed into the luxuriant gardens of Ghezireh. Here, at the gates, a native newspaper boy approached them, selling a local English evening paper, and holding up a news-bill for their inspection, upon which was printed "Another Bomb Outrage." Charles Erskine bought a copy, and having glanced at it, thrust it under his friend's nose.

"There, you see what these Egyptians are," he exclaimed, and Colonel Romance knew that the inevitable argument had been opened. "They're a lot of savages. This must be about the twentieth outrage they've committed against English officials within the last two years or so. Thank goodness, they missed their man this time! But what gets my goat is that it's such a damned cowardly way of trying to make us leave the country—this bombing or shooting any English official they can catch in a situation where there's no danger to their own wretched skins."

"Oh, well," said Colonel Romance, at once on the defensive, though, in this case, he agreed entirely with his friend, "every nation has its hooligans. The Irish were just as bad, and yet we're still fond of them, and I'm very proud myself of the bit of Irish blood I've got."

"That may be," Captain Erskine answered with heat, "but I know I wouldn't be proud of my Egyptian blood if I had any in my veins. And if you end

by marrying Girgis Pasha's daughter, I tell you straight your children won't be proud of it either." He gripped the Colonel's arm. "Look here," he said, "you've simply got to give her up."

"I'm not going to," Colonel Romance declared, shaking his arm free and pulling his felt hat well down over his ears, like a man about to face the weather. "I don't know if she'll ever be able to marry me; but if she ever is, I'm going to marry her, not only because she happens to be the woman I love, but also because I think she comes of splendid stock—stock which in every way it is right for an Englishman to introduce experimentally into our English jumble. Don't you realize that in my veins —and I am an average Englishman—there is already the blood of Romans, British, Anglo-Saxons, French, Danes, Dutch, Welsh, Scotch, Irish, and so on? A bit of the blood of the old Pharaohs might just add that something to my family which we are lacking. We're a very ordinary family at present: a drop of old Egypt in the mixture might lift us into something wonderful, something which might be of real service to England."

"Oh, rot!" Captain Erskine exclaimed, impatiently. "Look at the nervous organization of the modern Egyptians. Would your children stand a chance of being anything but highly-strung and nervous?"

"What if they are? I don't know much about geniuses and those sort of people; but I do know that they are all highly-strung, and that they owe their success to their nerves. Show me a single great man who hasn't been highly-strung. It seems to me that the reason why the Americans are getting ahead of us nowadays is simply because, like race-horses,

they are nervous—not dull and phlegmatic like so many of our people. We shall need some ginger in the next generation badly."

Captain Erskine looked round at him in amazement. "But it is just our bulldog, stolid character that gives us our strength," he said.

"I don't agree," Colonel Romance replied. "I've been thinking it out lately, and I believe that whatever stolid qualities we have are useful mainly in holding on to the things obtained for us by the men of our race who were not stolid. It was the reckless fellows, full of dash and imagination and nervous energy, who made England great, like Drake, and Nelson, and Gordon, and hundreds of others."

"Yes, but Egyptian blood is so damned uncontrolled," Charles Erskine protested. "These bomb outrages, for example. And this girl you're so infatuated by: look at her outburst in Mrs. Garrett's house in London when we found out she was a native. Look at the way she nearly shot herself at Ismuay. There's this rotten excitability in her blood, and she'll transmit it to her children."

"I think she behaved very splendidly," Colonel Romance replied. "I like hot-blooded people."

Charles Erskine attempted a new argument. "Anyway, East and West can't mate, and you know it. Racially, it's like an old woman being married to a young man. The East is old. The West is young and dominant. Do you want future Romances no longer to lead but to be led, no longer to govern but to be governed, because there flows in their veins the wretched thin blood of an old, old Eastern race which has outlived its strength? Are you going to spoil your stock?"

"No, I tell you I want to add that something to it

which shall galvanize it into splendid deeds. Look here! d'you think that creation is finished? D'you think that man has arrived at the final perfection? If there is a God who is our Creator, d'you think he has already produced the complete article? If you do, you're a fool. The whole thing is in a mess at present. The world is divided up into little groups of different species of men—the Creator's trial-pieces; and the next step is to take a bit from one group and add it to another, and a bit from that group and add it to this. That's what we did in England in the past—mixed the breeds until we produced something really vital: physically rather nondescript, perhaps, but mentally full of good stuff. And that's what is going on in America to-day. America is a sort of kitchen of the gods, where different types and different breeds are being boiled down into a new type. The people of our own country unconsciously started the pot boiling. They mixed and mixed until they produced a people so overflowing with new energy that they bubbled over into the new world; and then, on American soil, they went on mixing on a far larger scale; and I believe they're going to produce something really wonderful in the end, something more like God intended."

"That may be, if they stick to Western stock," Captain Erskine answered. "But they won't do much good if they let the East in, as they are doing now. There's already such a lot of weird stock in America—Armenians, Turks, Syrians, and so on, not to mention Jews. And with it comes nervousness and dilapidation. That sort of blood is poison to the West. It's like a drug, ruining a man's nerve, and undermining his power to command. It is full

of dreams and memories of old luxuries and old vices, which infect and soften his Western muscles. It's no good. It simply makes the children heirs to the rottenness of a nation's old age, and it will spread through generations of Westerners the neurotic indolence and the uncontrol of the East."

"Yes, but you can't say that of Egypt," Colonel Romance protested. "The Egyptians have been rulers of the world once, and even now they are intensely alive and active. All this patriotic business, 'Egypt for the Egyptians,' and this mania to get rid of us, is a sign of their renewed vitality. Take, for example, a man like Hassanein Bey. His expedition through the unknown Sahara is one of the great exploring feats of recent years. The only trouble is that they don't realize that it is England who has given them back their freedom and has made them hold their heads up again and be what they used to be once more."

"No, the Egyptians are not what they were," Charles Erskine argued. "There may be exceptions, but, on the whole, they're a poor lot now."

"Well, they had been sat upon by Turkey for nearly four hundred years when we took them in hand. But they've done marvels since the British occupation; and now that they're getting Westernized, now that they've got a new medium of expression, the world's going to hear from them again—you see."

They walked on in silence for a while. They had now issued from the gardens, and were passing along that fine avenue of acacias which borders the grounds of the great sporting club; and behind the trees the sun was descending towards the distant Pyramids. Smart carriages and automobiles were gliding past

them in an endless line; for here the rank and fashion of Cairo drives out every afternoon.

Suddenly Colonel Romance uttered an exclamation and directed his friend's attention to an approaching carriage drawn by two well-groomed and high-stepping horses. In it, a little stiffly, Girgis Pasha Marcos was seated alone. A moment later he had recognized them and had called to his coachman to stop.

"Oh, come on," said Captain Erskine, as his companion hesitated; but when he saw that Colonel Romance and the Pasha were going to speak to one another, he deliberately fixed his eyes on the road straight ahead and continued his walk.

"Ah, Colonel Romance," said the Egyptian, leaning forward in the carriage as it drew up beside the footwalk. "I am glad to have the opportunity of a word with you. I owe you an apology for my rudeness the other day at Ismuay."

"Not at all," the Colonel replied. "I can well understand your anger at my climbing into your house. I'm sorry I had to do it; but you prevented my seeing your daughter in the ordinary way." He was very much on his dignity.

"The whole thing was very unpleasant," said the Pasha, "and I so much regret having had to turn you and Mrs. Garrett so rudely out into the street. Your excitable friend, Captain Erskine, was the disturbing element. He is so uncontrolled and hot-headed. If only he hadn't flourished his revolver about in that melodramatic way, I might have been able to dismiss you with more ceremony. . . . I hope you can understand my feelings as a father, and can realize that nothing remained for me to do

but to effect Miriam's marriage at the earliest possible moment."

"Oh yes, I quite see your side of the matter," Colonel Romance answered. "A forced marriage of that kind is a pretty rotten sort of thing from our point of view; but I quite realize that your Egyptian ideas are different. . . ."

The Pasha spread his arms out. "What else could I do?" he asked, speaking in very serious tones. "I know you must be very angry about it, but some day you will thank me for having saved you from a piece of folly. Love is not everything, Colonel; duty to one's country comes first. You have only lost a lover, something which eventually can be replaced; but I have lost a daughter. I have incurred her most bitter hatred; and I should be a miserable man indeed did I not know in my heart that I have done right."

He paused, for there was genuine emotion in his voice, and he seemed anxious not to disclose his feelings. Then, with a shrug of his shoulders, he changed the direction of their conversation. "When are you leaving for England?" he asked.

"I don't know," Colonel Romance replied. "Fairly soon, I suppose."

The Pasha held out his hand. "Well," he said, "in case we do not meet again, I will wish you good-bye and good luck. Please don't think hardly of me. If ever you marry and have a daughter, and if, by chance, she should fall in love with an Egyptian, you will know what I felt."

Colonel Romance grasped his proffered hand. "Good-bye, Excellency," he replied, "and good luck in your new appointment. Try to keep your coun-

trymen friendly with England. After all, you know, England is the one hope of the old world."

Girgis Pasha signed to the coachman to proceed; and, raising his curved hand to his forehead in that military gesture which is the Egyptian form of salutation, he smiled and bowed, and thus passed from view.

Colonel Romance hastened his steps and presently caught up his friend near the gates of the sporting club. "Why did you walk on?" he asked with heat. "It was damned uncivil."

"I haven't anything to say to him," Charles Erskine replied with irritation; "and I think it was hardly in the best taste for you to talk to him either. But you're half mad, anyway: all men in love are . . . . Let's go into the club and have some tea."

They passed, frowning, into the grounds, and so came presently to the pavilion and to the wide lawn in front of it, backed by the great acacias and the palms, the foliage of which was ablaze with the setting sun. Here a military band was playing, and great numbers of bronzed English officers and officials, with their womenkind, were strolling to and fro, or were seated at small basket-work tables. Many of the men were wearing flannels, and had evidently been playing tennis; a few were in polo-dress; others wore the attire suitable for the golf which they had been playing upon the adjoining links; yet others were booted and spurred having taken their daily exercise on horseback; and here and there a striped blazer indicated that the wearer had taken part in the cricket match (The Army *v.* The Civil Service,) which had just been concluded. The majority of the women, too, were dressed for tennis or golf, or for riding.

It was a happy, healthy, wholesome picture: a fragment of England, transferred to the banks of the Nile. Here were men who had learnt England's great lesson—namely, the dealing with life in the spirit of English sport: playing not necessarily to win, but for the pleasure of the game; playing fair; playing with skill but with little cunning; playing with the laughter of high spirits, not with the grimness of trained efficiency; playing with the sustained energy of enjoyment, not with the nervous tension of the victory-hunter. Here were men tall and short, heavy and light, fat and lean, dark and fair: a nondescript crowd, held together by an ideal, standardized by a similar method of training, all educated in the same kind of schools, gentlemen taught by gentlemen.

The band was playing a selection from the works of Sullivan, that brilliant Jew whose music interprets the very spirit of the English; and under its inspiring influence Colonel Romance viewed the scene with enthralled interest.

He turned to his friend. "Is this club exclusively English?" he asked.

"Oh, no," Captain Erskine replied; "there are a good many Egyptian members. You see that fellow over there with the tennis racket in his hand: he is a big native landowner. And there's another, over there, with the fancy sweater: he is the Egyptian Under-Secretary of the Interior."

"It seems to me," said Colonel Romance, "that if you dress them in flannels and put a racket in their hands there's not much difference between Egyptians and English."

"Rot!" Captain Erskine answered, making an irritable movement. "That's a foolish thing to say."

The band was now playing Elgar's "Land of Hope and Glory," and as the inspiring strains swelled across the lawn, Colonel Romance suddenly became conscious of a sense of dramatic pride in his country. He hoped that the Egyptians who were present were being duly impressed by this music of Empire. "God Who made her mighty, make her mightier yet!" Yes, that was it: spread the knowledge of the glory of the old Union Jack over the world until justice and fair play and idealism should reign in all earth's dark places.

He noticed that the Egyptian Under-Secretary of the Interior was laughing and talking to the man seated next to him, and was giving no attention to the music. He could have gone over to him and knocked him off his chair.

A sudden feeling of shame entered his mind. Was he playing the traitor to his race? He belonged to a nation of conquering heroes; and here he was, contemplating an ultimate marriage with a daughter of a subordinate race. What would his father have said? Old General Romance had fought at Tell-el-Kebîr, when the Egyptian went down like ninepins would before the English or bolted like hares. He remembered how his father had told him that he had ordered his men not to kill more than they could help of the wretched fugitives; so our fellows, instead of cutting them down, just gave each one they overtook a good smack on the seat of his trousers with the flat of the sword to speed him on his way. He had said it would have been sheer slaughter to do anything else. "They wouldn't stand up to us," the old soldier had explained. "They had no stamina, no guts."

He looked about him at the sun-burnt faces of his

countrymen. All were intent: all had stopped smoking, or eating, or drinking. All were enthralled by this song of the great Motherland. There were dreams in their eyes, dreams of England's splendor. Conquered kings and beaten armies were parading before their inward vision; men from all over the earth were laying their tribute at the foot of the throne of the King-Emperor. . . .

The band stopped; and, with a thud, Colonel Romance came back to earth. He was ashamed; but now his shame was aroused by another train of thought—a recoil of the tide of his vision. He had caught himself out in a mental act of pure melodrama.

"Oh, damn that band!" he exclaimed, glaring at Captain Erskine. "'Land of Hope and Glory'!—that's the sort of stuff that is poison to the world. It eggs one on to race-hatreds, and wars, and everything else that causes misery on earth. The Germans feel that sort of thing when they sing 'Deutschland über Alles.' I'm never going to listen to a brass band again."

"What the hell are you talking about?" his friend asked in astonishment. "You'll have to see a doctor, you know."

"Oh, get out!" Colonel Romance exclaimed, rising to his feet. "I'm going back to the hotel. You stay here and eat your blasted bun. I want to be alone."

He turned on his heel, and walked off across the lawn, frowning like an angry schoolboy.

He arrived back at the hotel, hot, sticky, and irritable after his walk. He had covered the ground at a considerable pace; and, inside his trousers, the tail of his shirt had rucked up at the back, forming a wedge across his nether quarters which had been most exasperating. He went straight up to his room, pulled his clothes off, donned his resplendent silk dressing-gown, and at once proceeded to the bathroom. As a result, he was dressed for dinner before seven o'clock; but Miriam was not to arrive until half-past seven, and he therefore went to the reading-room in order to soothe his impatience by means of a book or a journal of some kind.

The room was empty, and he wandered disconsolately around it, glancing at the bookshelves, and sampling with boredom some of the bound volumes of the illustrated weeklies of twenty years ago. Presently he found, in a dark corner, a pile of Church of England Prayer Books and hymn-books—relics of the days of the war, when services had been held here for the wounded. He had been declaiming to Mary Garrett that morning on the subject of the marriage-service, and he now, therefore, carried one of the Prayer Books over to an easy chair and turned with interest to "The Solemnization of Matrimony" in order to ascertain whether it were as offensive an affair as his memory of the two or three weddings

he had attended in his lifetime had led him to suppose.

"Great Scott!" he muttered, as he read the astonishing old words. "This is even worse than I had remembered."

First of all, there was the "Dearly beloved, we are gathered together . . ." with which the ceremony opens, and the statement that marriage was "instituted of God in the time of man's innocency, signifying unto us the mystical union that is betwixt Christ and His Church." He scratched his head and wondered what on earth this could mean. He detested mysticism and symbolism; and the suggestion that a husband bore some occult resemblance to a sacramental Christ and the wife to the Holy Catholic Church frankly gave him the creeps. Then, a few lines further on, he read that marriage "was ordained for a remedy against sin, and to avoid fornication"; and at this information he uttered an audible whistle. "That," he exclaimed in his heart, "is simply indecent. I wonder they allow it to be said or printed."

Then came the question to the man: "Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife? . . . Wilt thou love her, comfort her, humor, and keep her in sickness and in health; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her, so long as ye both shall live?" That was beautiful: it embodied precisely that desire which he felt towards Miriam. But—oh, horror!—it was followed by the question to the woman: "Wilt thou have this man . . . Wilt thou obey him and serve him . . .?" This was awful! His idea of a wife was as a companion, a chum, a mate; his equal and his fellow: sharing all things with him: not as a sort of housemaid, serving and obeying him.

In the prayers which followed he read that the new

husband and wife were likened unto Isaac and Rebecca, and to Abraham and Sarah—funny old Jew characters who had no relation whatsoever to modern English life. Next he read that she was to be "loving and amiable, faithful and obedient to her husband," and was to be "a follower of holy and godly matrons," not adorning herself with "that outward adorning of plaiting her hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel," but with "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," after the manner of "the holy women in the old time," who were "in subjection unto their own husbands, even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord."

He shut the Prayer Book and tossed it on to the table. "Beastly, utterly beastly!" he exclaimed in his heart. "What has all this bosh got to do with modern life? What on earth is the Church thinking of in allowing this obsolete stuff to stand? I'd rather not be married at all than permit the woman I loved to be subjected to a prehistoric ceremony of this kind, to have all this nonsense read over her in the presence of a crowd of friends and relations, and to be dressed up and a veil put over her face as though she were a trembling victim of a secret cult, being initiated into some sacramental and unmentionable rite." It was almost with relief that he realized the improbability of a church wedding for Miriam and himself. Marriage there would probably be in the end; but in the circumstances of the case it would take place quietly in a registry office. He would want God's blessing upon the union, but that could be asked, as it would be given, in the secret places of their hearts. Marriage at a registry office had once seemed to him to be a very vulgar sort of expedient, made use of by such people as stage-struck young

peers and designing chorus-girls, or similar assortments from the realms of secondrate Folly; but now he began to think of it as a convenient escape from the grossness of the Church.

Marriage, he felt, was so essentially a private affair. Some form of binding contract between a man and a woman in love was necessary, as a means of safeguarding the interests of possible offspring, and as a means of establishing and maintaining the hearth, home, and family circle, which, in spite of all light criticism, form the basis of decent life; but all that your neighbors and relations were entitled to know was that you two had come to live together and to look after each other, and had set up house together. The thing they were *not* entitled to know was when, where, and how the living together began. Yet a marriage, under the auspices of religion, turned that romantic beginning, which should be so spontaneous, so instinctive, so unarranged, into a definite, cold-blooded, calendar-fixed, clock-timed transaction, a large part of which was performed in public. It seemed to him that a house-warming, or some similar ceremony celebrating a union already quietly and privately established some little time, ought to be the first public intimation of a marriage; and he promised himself that if ever Miriam and he were legally united, none but themselves and the necessary witnesses should be present at their wedding.

But in the case of Miriam and himself, this privacy had already been endangered. Boutros Bey had told him, and Mrs. Wiggin had told Miriam, that all things had been planned and made ready; and, in so doing, the spontaneity had been lost; and an embarrassing self-consciousness had been introduced

which was as bad as, and worse than, that thrust upon a modest but inarticulate people by the custom of public marriage. They were being brought together like prize-cattle, or royalties; and his English sensitiveness was outraged.

His heart was beating nervously when he went to the front hall to await Miriam's arrival; but when, presently, she came, he was so enthralled by her appearance that he forgot his shyness and greeted her with effusion. She looked so charming as she stood in the soft light, wrapped in her rich cloak, and, later, she smiled at him so enchantingly as she stepped out from the cloak-room in her elegant little dress, that he could find no words to express his volcanic sensations, and had to extract what relief he could from inadequate and commonplace compliments.

He took her to a softly-lit table which he had reserved in a corner of the restaurant, within sound of a small fountain tinkling into a rockery pool illuminated by dim blue lights. Here they were more or less screened by palms and pots of flowers from the gaze of the other diners, and the orchestra was at a sufficient distance to be agreeably seductive. The situation, indeed, was all that two lovers could desire at dinner-time; and it did not fail to have its effect upon Miriam and Colonel Romance.

Yet, though their mutual love found expression in many intimate little remarks and in many smiles and tender glances, there was a sadness in Miriam's demeanor which not even the excellent wine could dissipate. It was, however, a sweet sorrow, a gentle despair, such as only love can understand: it was like a poet's grief, and it was fittingly accompanied, as it chanced, by the *chef d'orchestre* upon his violin, for

he was playing the tragic melodies of Chopin and other sad souls as though his own heart were breaking.

"It is wonderful to be alone with you, Miriam," said Colonel Romance, touching her hand as it rested upon the table, and deriving as astonishing a thrill from the contact that a sort of temporary oblivion sponged from his mind whatever it was that he was going to say. Their meal was now finished, and they were drinking their coffee.

"What does it matter whether we are alone or not?" she sighed. "The things I want to say can't be said; the things I want to do can't be done."

"Oh, but life holds all sorts of possibilities for us," he told her. "Some day Boutros will divorce you, and then you will marry me, won't you?"

"But that would ruin you socially. Everybody says that a man who marries a 'native' woman goes to the dogs."

Colonel Romance laughed. "Answer me truly: you don't think of yourself as a 'native' woman, do you?"

"No," she answered; "but I think of some of my female relations in that way; and I can't bear the thought of your being connected by marriage with them."

"I shouldn't notice it," he said. "You and I would live in England."

"English society is very strict in regard to these matters," she reminded him.

"I don't care a hang for English society," he replied.

She was silent for a while. Then she said, "Supposing Boutros doesn't divorce me?"

He touched her hand once more. "In that case

you'll have to run away with me, Miriam, and we'll go on living together so long that at last we'll be married by the world's opinion."

She smiled. "You're simply a child," she said. "You don't know what you're up against."

"I rely on my instinct," he declared.

"But what is instinct?" she asked. "Is it instinct that makes me feel all hot and cold, anl makes my head go round when I'm anywhere near you? I don't think so. I think it is just love, unreasoning love."

"Well, anyway, I've seen love wake in you, and I can't see it die again." He looked at her with mournful eyes.

"It will never die," she answered. "I've given myself to you, and I shall never take back what I have given."

"Well, then, what's the use of arguing about it?" he asked. "We love. That is sufficient. Love is sufficient."

"Love has its consequences," she said. "We have to think of the consequences. We might have children. Do you think they would be proud of their Egyptian relations?"

"But that's just the wonderful thing about it," he replied, his face radiant. "We might produce the superman. I told you once before, we should be like a new Adam and Eve: we might be the ancestor and ancestress of a new race, a blend of the greatest people of antiquity and the greatest people of today. The Almighty, believe me, didn't create different nations simply so that they should prey upon one another: He created them as stock to be drawn upon in the development of the final man. They are like the different chemicals in a laboratory: the chemist mixes them until something startling happens. God

meant us to mix. I don't think we have got to the stage yet when white can be mixed with brown, and I don't suppose white will ever mix with black; but you are as white as I am, and I dare say all Heaven is waiting, breathless, to see what will happen when an Egyptian and an Englishman intermarry. The Englishman is already such an extraordinary mixture in himself: there may be just this one ingredient wanting to start a regular explosion of genius."

She shook her head sadly. Her heart seemed to be full of the world's sorrow. All the misery of separation, all the grief of the unmated, all the woe of the childless throbbed in her head; and the despair of it nearly choked her. It was as though the memories of the past that were in her blood and bones were crowding into her brain. Priests and priestesses, kings and queens, all dead now and turned to dust, were whispering their old loves to her, and sorrowing for their lost bodies. Dreams of warm nights by the Nile, and the glory of the visions of ancient splendor, were floating through her head. It was as though hands were stretched out eagerly to her from the dim and remote Past, striving so hard to come into touch with her life, yearning to love again through her.

"All the ghosts of all the years are enchanting me here in my own country," she said, turning her head from side to side in desperation. "All the longing of dead lovers tells me to love you. But would it be the same in England? Oh, be strong for me! Be strong! Give me up!"

"I can't give you up," he whispered. "I don't know where the road leads to: I don't care. Love is my guide. Love points the way. The road may prove to be bad going; there may be all sorts of unpleasantness to be met; but there it is. It's our

way, Miriam. It's the only road for you and me."

He spoke with fervor, and there was something in the sound of his voice which lulled her doubts to sleep. She was unable to resist. She had wanted so much to avoid hurting his career, or causing him any possible suffering in the future; but he had overridden her arguments, and she felt herself slipping towards him, sliding into his heart. . . .

They were looking so intently at one another that they did not see the approach of a young man in evening dress, wearing a red tarboush. They did not notice him until he had come up to their table. It was Miriam's husband,

"HELLO, you two!" said Boutros Bey, smiling down at them, but not with much goodwill. "I was just looking for you, Miriam. I got the note you left for me, saying you were dining here with Colonel Romance, so I thought I had better find you, and warn you. I, also, happen to be dining here—with your father: I've left him in the American Bar, and just slipped in first on the excuse of engaging a table. I was afraid we were going to walk right into you; but you are pretty secluded here in this corner, I'm glad to say."

"Thanks for telling me," Miriam replied, "but I don't mind meeting my father. I don't bear him any ill-will now. . . ."

"Yes, but *I* mind your meeting him very much indeed," he declared. "I should look such a silly fool, shouldn't I?—letting my bride go out and dine with another man. . . . Your father and I were to dine at half-past eight, and it's now five past nine; and I've had the deuce of a time keeping him drinking cocktails with me in the bar, so as to give you a chance to finish and clear out. I'm already half drunk as it is."

"You don't show it," said Colonel Romance, politely.

"You've finished dinner, haven't you?" Boutros Bey asked. "Have you paid your bill? Yes?

Well, don't you think you'd better slip out quietly there by the side door? Otherwise he'll probably spot you as you leave, and there'll be a scene. I don't feel as though I could tolerate the Pasha accusing me of being impotent, or calling me a backboneless ninny to-night, not with all these cocktails inside me. In fact, I think it very inconsiderate of you to dine in a public place like this, and expose me to that sort of thing. This corner may be secluded; but still, it's a public place."

"I'm sorry," said Colonel Romance. "I thought you wanted us to be seen together."

Miriam looked quickly at him. "Is that why you asked me here?" she asked, with sudden annoyance.

"No, no!" Colonel Romance replied, quickly. "No, I meant I thought Boutros Bey was indifferent to our movements."

"I don't mind what you do in private," the young man answered, a somewhat drunken leer on his face; "but I don't want to be made a laughing-stock. I mean to say, I don't mind it being understood that I caught an English officer in my wife's bedroom, and half killed him, and then divorced my wife; but I won't have it said that I let you carry on your kissing and cuddling in public under my nose."

Colonel Romance sprang up from his chair. "Come on, Miriam," he exclaimed. "I think it will be best if we go." There was a feeling of disgust upon him again.

"Yes, that's right," said Boutros Bey more amiably. "Why don't you go back to my house? The servants are in the secret, you know. You can have the place to yourself till midnight; in fact, you can have it all night if you like."

"Shut up!" snapped the Colonel in an angry undertone. "Please understand that I don't do things like that."

"I don't care how you do them," Boutros Bey laughed, misunderstanding him, "so long as you do do them. I wish you'd get on with it."

"Be quiet, Boutros!" said Miriam sharply, as though she were speaking to a dog.

He held up a somewhat drunken hand. "Don't lose your temper. I'm trying to help you. I don't know what's the matter with you both." He nudged the Englishman playfully. "If you don't hurry up I'll get ahead of you yet, Colonel, in spite of Victoria." He laughed loudly. "After all, Miriam is my wife, though I *am* in love with Victoria."

Colonel Romance did not answer. He took hold of Miriam's arm—gripped it, in fact, and propelled her towards the side door which Boutros Bey had indicated.

"Good-night!" the Egyptian called after them. "And pleasant dreams. . . ."

The doorway led to a passage which brought them round to the front hall, and here Miriam fled into the cloak-room, nor did she emerge for some considerable time.

"Let's get out of this," she said, when, wrapped in her cloak, she again joined him. Her voice and expression were calm once more; but there was a distressing coldness and distance in her manner. She had been so near, and now she was gone again into the outer darkness.

He led her out on the front terrace, sick at heart. "Look here," he exclaimed suddenly. "Let's make a bolt for it. I can't stand this situation, and I know it is hurting you, too. Come away with me

now, Miriam. It's a quarter past nine. There's a train to Alexandria at ten-five, and there's a boat sailing for Venice at sunrise to-morrow."

She stared at him with disdainful eyes. "What d'you mean?" she asked. "Do you mean that we should go away together?—behave as that dreadful young man has been suggesting?"

"No. We'll go by the same train and boat; but we'll be just friends. We can think out things afterwards. But, for the moment, the thing is to get away. We *must* get away. All this is impossible. Come on, Miriam: be brave! You can pack a few things in a bag: Boutros will send the rest on to you. And you know you can trust me to behave with decency."

She did not hesitate. "All right," she said, but she still spoke from afar off. "I'll do it. Call a taxi."

They hastened down the steps of the terrace together, and soon were speeding through the noisy streets, Miriam sitting silent beside him, as though her emotions were frozen. When they reached the house, they were admitted by the native servant, who showed neither surprise nor interest as he ushered them into the drawing-room; and a moment later Miriam had run up the stairs to her room. The taxi meanwhile remained at the door.

Colonel Romance quietly lit a cigarette, and was pleased to observe that his steady hand revealed no agitation of his nerves. His brain seemed to be remarkably clear, and he viewed the situation with the self-control of a born campaigner. Presently he walked over to the writing desk, and wrote a brief note to Boutros Bey, stating, in a single sentence, that Miriam had decided to sail for Europe at once,

and that he was going with her, merely as a friend. He sealed up this letter, and, going over to the mantelpiece, placed it in front of the gilt clock, the hands of which at that moment, were pointing to half-past nine. He then returned to the desk and scribbled a similar piece of information to be left at the hotel for Mrs. Garrett, adding a request that she would pay his hotel bill for him, and collect whatever articles he might leave in his room. Fortunately he was carrying nearly a hundred pounds in notes in his wallet; but he did not wish to reduce his sum, nor, indeed, would he have time to settle his account himself.

He heard a sound upon the staircase outside, and, hastening to the door, saw Miriam, now wearing a big fur coat over her evening dress and a felt hat, dragging a fair-sized piece of baggage down the steps. There was no servant to be seen. He therefore ran up the stairs, seized hold of her burden, from which the sleeve of a dress and the leg of a stocking were protruding; and together they hastened through the front door and into the waiting taxi.

Six or seven minutes later they were back at the hotel, and now it was his turn to dash up the stairs, while Miriam sat back in the taxi, staring in front of her. At five minutes to ten he returned, carrying a large suitcase in one hand and, over the other arm, an overcoat which did not conceal various articles of clothing bundled together underneath it. At one minute to ten they reached the station, and they were safe in the train a few seconds before it started. Fortunately they had a compartment to themselves.

"Now the fat's in the fire!" he panted, as they steamed out into the darkness. "We'd better get

these things of ours properly packed. You do yours first: I promise not to look."

She smiled but faintly. "You understand, Robert, don't you?—I'm not eloping with you. I'm simply going to Europe to start my life over again; and you happen to be traveling by the same boat."

"Yes, I understand that," he answered. . . . "Well, I'm glad, at any rate, that we've had our dinner. The train doesn't get to Alexandria till one a.m., and we shan't be aboard till two."

"What about tickets?" she asked. "I've only got about twenty pounds with me, and my jewelry. I've got my passport, too; we came out to Egypt by the Brindisi route, so it's valid for Italy, fortunately."

"So is mine," he replied. "There won't be any difficulty. When we get on board I shall have to wake the Purser up, and bribe him or something. I believe these Italian ship's officers are very amenable."

She began to fold and repack her clothes, while he, turning tactfully from her, stared out of the window into the darkness.

"How long is the voyage?" she asked presently. "Four days? I think I can just manage with these clothes, but I'll have to buy a lot of things in Venice. I don't know what I'm going to do about money."

"I'll lend you some," he said. "I don't know if I ever told you: I'm quite well off, you know. I'm not as rich as your father or Boutros, of course, but I've got plenty."

"Yes, I suppose I shall have to borrow from you," she answered, "until I can sell my jewelry. These pearls are worth quite a lot. They were left to me by my mother. What consoles me is that I've found

out that all the money my father has spent on me came from a fund left by my mother for that purpose; so I am not defrauding him. I'm going to get work in England—start a hat-shop, or something."

She finished her packing presently, and thereupon he set about the rearrangement of his own belongings. When this was satisfactorily accomplished, he sat himself down by her side, and there was silence between them. He wanted most desperately to put his arms about her and to kiss her, but he did not dare to do so. Englishmen are said to be shy of women; but, more often, they are simply afraid of women thinking that they are going to misbehave themselves. The English male is such a sensitive creature.

Both Colonel Romance and Miriam were running away from the facilities offered to them for their love-making: they were in flight from a too obvious, a too expected, a too awaited intrigue. They were in search of love's spontaneous, unpremeditated moment; that moment when, the blood being hot, Nature should shake herself free from man's dictation; that moment, unable to be decreed by clock or calendar, place or circumstance, when their two hearts should flame to the same impulse.

They had been shocked by the way of the East, the way that was not secret. It was the method of a primitive form of society: it still survived in the West also, but in diminishing degree. Occidental society, unable to stand against Nature's power, was slowly giving ground before her, and was abandoning the dictation of its own artificial codes; but in the Orient the old crude order was still obeyed, and, in the case of these two lovers, it had had the effect of setting up insurmountable barriers between them.

Towards the end of the journey, it is true, these walls were beginnig to crack; and as the train swung across the points into the Alexandrian terminus Colonel Romance's hand was clasped about that of Miriam, and their arms were linked. In a one-horsed carriage, they rattled through the streets of the city down to the docks; and, after some tiresome delays caused by sleepy policemen and harbor officials, they found themselves at length standing before the Purser's office, on board the vessel which was to carry them away from Egypt. Fortunately the Purser had been busily engaged until a late hour upon the ship's papers, and he was not yet asleep.

"This lady and I," said Colonel Romance, coughing a little nervously, explained to him, "have both found it necessary to return to Europe as quickly as possible, and at a moment's notice. Can you give us two single cabins?"

The Purser was a man of infinite politeness. He suggested that they would perhaps prefer one double cabin; he hinted that they had perhaps inadvertently forgotten that they were married. No? Well, then, he would find them separate accommodation, but close to one another. Then, having received payments in cash, and having glanced at their passports in a purely formal manner, he immediately assigned to them two outside cabins amidships, the liner having but half its complement of passengers. Thereupon a weary steward conducted them below.

The cabins faced one another on either side of a short passage leading from the starboard corridor; and here they were soon established and their baggage unpacked.

"Good-night, Miriam," said Colonel Romance, taking her hand in his, as they stood before their

respective doors. "Sleep soundly. I am sure you have done the right thing in taking this step, and your mind should be at rest."

"Yes," she answered. "I'm glad you made me take my courage in both hands. I expect I shall sleep like a top. Good-night." She smiled at him, and, without another word, entered her cabin, and shut the door.

Colonel Romance stood for a while in his own cabin, disconsolately staring about him. Then he undressed and went to bed. He did not sleep, however: his brain was too active, too full of hopes and dreams of the future; and for more than an hour he turned from side to side, vainly courting oblivion.

Over and over again the thought passed through his mind that Miriam was now in his hands, and that he could take her and possess her whensoever he wished. What was there to restrain him? And yet he could not forget that his present situation was due almost entirely to the fact that both he and she had recoiled from the license which had been so vulgarly thrust at them. The unpremeditated moment, Nature's moment, completely devoid of arrangement, entirely undictated, had not yet come: perhaps it would never come. Miriam had told him, in a roundabout way, something of what she had gone through at the Coptic wedding; and he himself was able to fill in the details from what he had learnt of native customs. The whole subject must surely have become horrible to her pure mind; and, as has been said, he was embarrassed lest she might regard him as a man who loved her, "desired" her, in that way.

A man of middle age, who has had several so-called affairs of the heart, is surprisingly modest when at last he really falls in love. He thinks, in his blind-

ness, that the beloved one must hate in him those evidences of human passion which have been so freely squandered in the past. He wishes to appear to her primarily as her heart's mate, her soul's brother. He is terrified lest she should believe him to be impelled by his mere lust and desires. She, on the other hand, knows well enough that the one cannot be separated from the other; and she may even be offended by that every effort on his part not to offend her.

As Colonel Romance lay sleepless in his berth, he determined that he would not take advantage of his position. He would be Miriam's devoted cavalier: it should be his life's sweetest task to make her happy, to protect her, and in the end, by God's grace, to be married to her, and, through her, to give to the world their contribution towards the ultimate production of the superman.

She had told him plainly enough that she desired only his companionship, his spiritual love, so to speak; and he was proud to think that, as an Englishman, she could rely on him not to misbehave himself. Love is indeed blind.

Suddenly he sat bolt upright in his berth. A sound had come to his ears from across the passage, a sound like a suppressed sob. He listened intently for a full minute, but the sound was not repeated during that period. Then, just as he was composing himself for sleep, once again he thought he heard it; and at this he arose, put on his dressing-gown, and quietly opened the door. A moment later there came to him, through the open ventilator opposite, an unmistakable sniff, followed by that stammering intake of the breath which is the result of many tears.

He did not hesitate. Very softly he knocked upon

the door of Miriam's cabin. "What's the matter? —are you crying?" he whispered.

He turned the handle experimentally, and the door swung open. The light was dim, but he could just discern the girl's figure in the berth, the black mass of her hair upon the pillow, and a little white handkerchief held to her eyes.

"What's the matter?" he repeated. "Are you feeling ill?"

"Oh, go away!" she wailed, and a white arm waved despairingly at him out of the darkness.

He entered the cabin, shut the door behind him, and, a moment later, was kneeling by her side, his wild arms clasped around her. Her tears wet his cheeks.

"My beloved, my darling," he whispered. "What are you crying for. Oh, my darling. . . ."

Her bare arm went up in protest, and swayed indecisively in the air, her hand clenching and unclenching itself as he nearly stifled her with his kisses. Then, slowly, passionately, it descended around his neck.